

A CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF AND  
RESPONSE TO VIOLENT REVOLUTION

A professional project  
submitted to the faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont  
in partial fulfillment for  
the degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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*This professional project, completed by*

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## ABSTRACT

This project examines the problem of formulating a theological and ethical understanding of and response to violent revolution. In addition, this project also examines contrasting First and Third World theological perspectives on revolution, and the problem this creates for the church in making ethical judgments about revolution. The principal question being addressed in this project is if the church can formulate an understanding of and response to the problem of violent revolution that is both pertinent to the context of the Third World and faithful to the Christian moral and theological tradition.

The methodology employed, in response to this question, is 1.) to examine the historical development of the church's attitude toward the role and authority of the state, and the use of violence both to protect and challenge the state; 2.) to examine the perspectives of four contemporary western theologians (Helmut Thielicke, Karl Barth, Robert McAfee Brown, and John Howard Yoder) on revolution and critique their perspectives by liberation theologians (Hugo Assmann, Gustavo Gutierrez, Jose Miguez Bonino, and Juan Luis Segundo) in terms of theological methodology and ethical judgments; and 3.) to examine and employ an educational methodology that places First World Christians within the simulated context of the Third World in which contrasting theological and ethical perspectives can be compared by the students.

The result of this project is the construction of an adult educational curriculum and simulation game that is designed for use in church school, campus ministry, and college classroom settings. In addition, there is also a critical review of the role liberation theology can play in formulating an appropriate understanding of and response to violent revolution in the modern world.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to examine the ethical and theological options available to the church in revolutionary situations. It will also examine a variety of Christian responses to the problem of revolution. These responses range from the actual use of violence to repudiating it as a means of achieving social, political and economic change. This project will also examine the historical Christian attitudes towards revolution and apply contemporary theological reflection to the context of the Third World through the use of an educational curriculum and simulation game.

## THE PROBLEM AND ITS RELEVANCY FOR THE CHURCH

The Christian church is an international community. It represents the religious faith of many diverse people on every continent. As church historian Kenneth Scott Latourette has written, ". . . Christianity is today more widely distributed geographically and more deeply rooted among more peoples than it or any other faith has ever been."<sup>1</sup>

Although it shares a common faith, the church exists in a variety of different social, political, and economic

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<sup>1</sup>Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity (New York: Harper & Row, 1953) I, xiv.

contexts. Many Christians live in relatively stable, secure, and prosperous environments--the so-called First World.<sup>2</sup> But for a growing number of Christians the situation is the opposite. The church participates in settings characterized by injustice, poverty, and instability. These Christians live in desperate situations where terror, violence, and fear are commonplace.<sup>3</sup> In short, the church exists in contexts that are ripe with revolutionary fervor and violent upheaval. As a South American newspaper editorial indicates:

An immense and ever growing majority is becoming conscious of its force, of its misery, and of the injustice of that political, legal, social, and economic "order" which it is obliged to accept; and that majority is not disposed to wait longer. It demands a change: a rapid, profound, and total change of structures. If violence is necessary, it is ready to use violence.<sup>4</sup>

The church is confronted directly by the problem of violent revolution. The church must decide if revolution is

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<sup>2</sup>By "First World" I mean the nations of western Europe and the United States which share common political and economic ideologies. These nations are characterized by Irving Louis Horowitz as being a "highly mobile, commodity-oriented, and ideologically egalitarian social system." See Irving Louis Horowitz, Three Worlds of Development (New York: Oxford University, 1972) 6. For a more in depth definition of the First World, see pp.5-9.

<sup>3</sup>The World Council of Churches describes the "lesser developed" nations as areas of "perennial despair." World Council of Churches: World Conference on Church and Society, Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967) 115.

<sup>4</sup>As quoted in Donald Eugene Smith (ed.) Religion, Politics, and Social Change in the Third World (New York: Free Press, 1971) 256.

an acceptable method for eradicating the injustice and exploitation suffered by the majority of the world's people. Or as J.G. Davies clarifies:

Violence and revolution then are on the agenda that the world presents to the church, because the twentieth century has witnessed a political awakening of the masses who had hitherto been acquiescent before the existing power structures. These people are demanding a share in power and wealth, even if this involves violent revolution. Theological reflection upon this determination to participate in the shaping of their own future is obviously imperative.<sup>5</sup>

The church is confronted by the issue of violent revolution because it is part of a world that is experiencing rapid change and upheaval. The problem is not confined, however, to those parts of the Christian community that live in close proximity to revolutionary ferment. The church in its entirety must address the issue because of its shared faith and participation in international economic and political structures.

The problem of violent revolution needs to be theologically understood, examined, and critiqued by all Christians. This task is especially imperative for Christians living in the First World. Although they are geographically removed from the context of revolutionary ferment, they will nonetheless affect and be affected by the struggle.

In any case to write of violence and revolution outside an advanced revolutionary situation is required because

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<sup>5</sup> J.G. Davies, Christians, Politics, and Violent Revolution (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976) 4.

no one in this one world can say that he or she is totally unconnected or unaffected by such circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

To use Paul's imagery, what affects one part of the body affects all. Likewise, the whole church must examine those parts of its "body" that are directly confronted by revolutionary violence and apply its theological reflection to the contemporary social, political, and economic contexts.<sup>7</sup>

The primary question is not: should the church address the problem of revolution? The question is instead: what is a proper understanding of and response to violent revolution, its causes, and available options? Revolution is action within the world to which the church must respond. J.G. Davies again provides a helpful insight:

Since revolution is indeed a widespread contemporary phenomenon, Christians cannot simply ignore it. They may not like it; they may wish to repudiate it, but they cannot pursue their discipleship in the world and pretend it does not exist. They have no real alternative but to seek to understand it and its relationship to the gospel and to define their own position vis-a-vis revolution in the light of this critical appraisal.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>7</sup>This means that if theology is to address the problem of revolution it must examine political, economic, and social structures within specific historical contexts--i.e., the church must develop and articulate a "political hermeneutic." For more in depth discussions of a political hermeneutic, see Jürgen Moltmann, Religion, Revolution, and the Future (New York: C. Scribner's, 1969) 83-107, and Dorothee Soelle, Political Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974). For a critique of Moltmann's and Soelle's positions, see John B. Cobb, Jr., Process Theology as Political Theology (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982)

<sup>8</sup>Davies, 88.

The task for Christians, therefore, is to theologically examine the problem of revolution and its related issues,<sup>9</sup> then critique this examination in light of contemporary political, social, and economic realities.

Such theological reflection, however, should not occur in a vacuum but in specific historical, social, and political contexts. The present context is the so-called Third World. The Third World consists of those nations and people that systematically suffer from structures of violence,<sup>10</sup> economic underdevelopment, inequitable distribution of wealth, and domination by political elites who are supported by colonial and neo-colonial structures. A revolution is directed against practices and policies that maintain structures of violence, economic tutelage, and control by elites. The Third World is the current context for understanding revolution because it is here that unjust situations are most obvious, and revolution is advocated as a workable method to achieve social, political, and economic justice. In addition, the Third World provides a potential corrective for theological presuppositions that the church holds regarding the use of violence to oppose existing authority.

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<sup>9</sup>The related issues are the authority of the state, its use of violence to protect its authority, and the use of violence to achieve political, social, and economic change. These topics will be examined in chapters two and three.

<sup>10</sup>For a discussion of the Third World as the modern context of revolution, see Davies, 1-8.



If Christians living in the First World are to make adequate judgments about revolution, they must be in "dialogue" with the context of the Third World. By this I do not necessarily mean a "face-to-face encounter," but an attempt to "see" the situation from the perspective of the Third World. Only after this is accomplished can judgments be offered concerning what modes of behavior are appropriate for Christians in revolutionary situations. In other words, theological analysis and ethical judgments must be applicable to concrete circumstances.

Generally most First World Christians do not know what options are open to the Third World church in revolutionary situations. This lack of understanding can be remedied through a dialogical process. Only when the context of revolution is examined from a variety of perspectives can the church--as a global community--formulate an appropriate understanding of and response to violent revolution. Only after this process is initiated can theological and ethical judgments be offered that are relevant to the context and faithful to the Christian tradition. There are, however, two dangers to be avoided in this dialogical process.

First, theological analysis of revolution often reflects western or First World biases. These biases are not necessarily relevant to the context of the Third World. For example, such concepts as legitimate political authority and the state's obligation to maintain order reflect assumptions

that support and perpetuate the status quo in the Third World. Legitimate political authority, from a First World perspective, consists of many governments that are supported by neo-colonialist structures.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the maintenance of order is normally associated with existing political authority. But such authority is the principal source of terror and violence for many people, and existing governments are, therefore, the primary cause of disorder in the Third World.<sup>12</sup> Traditional western presuppositions reflect ideological biases that do not provide an adequate starting point for a Christian understanding of and response to the revolutionary context of the Third World. Or as Alves maintains:

. . . we are saying that the traditional ways of doing theology must recognize their ideological bias, their rather unambiguous relationships with colonialism, racism, and economic exploitation. We believe that your theology to a great degree--although it does not want to recognize this--is part of cultural imperialism.<sup>13</sup>

Traditional theological understandings and value judgments

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<sup>11</sup>For a description of neo-colonialist structures, see *ibid.*, 109-110.

<sup>12</sup>Most traditional thinking assumes that political authority exists to reward the good and punish the wicked, and to protect the innocent from criminal behavior, thereby establishing social order. In many Third World nations, however, existing political authority is the source of terror and economic exploitation of its own citizens, and is the principal cause of social disorder. In this context, "law" perpetuates behavior that is normally "criminal."

<sup>13</sup>As quoted by William H. Lazareth, "Foreword," in Jose Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975) xv.

concerning revolution cannot be directly applied to the context of the Third World. The process (and history) for achieving social, economic, and political change in the United State, for example, is far different than in El Salvador, Nicaragua, or Guatemala. To try to transport one set of experiences from one context to another is an artificial and inappropriate enterprise.

Second, Third World theologies run the risk of being co-opted and consequently ignored. Theological formulations from a Third World perspective can perform a critical function. If these developing theologies are allowed to stand on their own integrity, dialogue can occur. The result can be a Christian understanding of and response to revolution that represents the global and pluralistic character of the church. There is the risk, however, that such dialogue will not occur but that Third World perspectives will be "absorbed" by the First World church--bought and used as a product by a consumer. As Frederick Herzog explains in referring to North American reaction to Latin American liberation theology:

Some North Americans packaging it [liberation theology] as a consumer good are talking about it as an "import." The word itself reflects the primarily consumer mentality north of the border.<sup>14</sup>

If a theological "consumer mentality" prevails, the perspectives of the Third World will be generalized to the point

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<sup>14</sup>Frederick Herzog, "Introduction" in Hugo Assmann, Theology for a Nomad Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1976) 5.

that they will not provide a corrective to traditional western responses.

To better prepare First World Christians for this dialogical process, an educational approach is needed that will "place them in the revolutionary context of the Third World"<sup>15</sup> and confront them with available options. Such an educational design should also facilitate a dialogue between traditional western theological thinking and current revolutionary contexts. This educational venture should not attempt to reassert traditional theological formulations, nor merely "import" Third World perspectives--stripping them of any contextual reference. Such an educational experience should instead provide an opportunity for understanding the political, social, and economic context of the Third World and engage in a critical appraisal of traditional western perspectives.

One's experience and practical possibilities will of course vary according as one is or is not oneself a victim of oppression and injustice; but even allowing for the part which experience and practice properly play in reflection, it should be feasible for Christians whatever the form and degree of their existential involvement, at least to understand one another in discussion of the theological and ethical foundations of their political attitudes in the face of oppression and injustice.<sup>16</sup>

The educational goals of this project are, therefore,

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<sup>15</sup>This does not refer to a literal or geographical placement.

<sup>16</sup>Geoffrey Wainwright, "Revolution and Quietism: Two Political Attitudes in Theological Perspective," Scottish Journal of Theology 29 (1976) 536.

twofold: first, to present to First World Christians the revolutionary context of the Third World and examine possible responses within that context. The second goal is to confront First World Christians with the revolutionary conditions of the Third World through the employment of a simulation game that requires participants to respond to simulated revolutionary conditions.

#### THESIS AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

The thesis of this project is that an appropriate Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution can be achieved through theological reflection upon possible options facing the Third World in revolutionary situations. The contention is also that such an understanding can be partially accomplished through an educational methodology that simulates the conditions of the Third World and provides opportunities in which various theological perspectives can be explored, understood, and critiqued. In this manner, individuals can engage in dialogue within the parameters of a specific context and can in turn critique viewpoints that emerge from within the context itself.

Before further inquiry, however, the terms "violence" and "revolution" need defining.

First, violence, according to Robert McAfee Brown, is:

Whatever "violates" another in the sense of infringing upon or disregarding or abusing or denying that other, whether physical harm is involved or not, can be under-

stood as an act of violence. The basic overall definition of violence would then become violation of personhood.<sup>17</sup>

Violence prohibits people from establishing a worthwhile existence. Violence, however, is not isolated to individual acts but is indicative of entire social systems. Such violence is systemic or structural since political, social, and economic relationships result in violations of people's integrity and livelihood. Intent to inflict violence is not, therefore, the primary concern. Although individuals may not intend to violate the personhood of another, they nonetheless participate in and perpetuate political, social, and economic systems that cause violence. Ethical analysis and judgments cannot focus exclusively on individual behavior but must also consider complex systems and structures that take on a life of their own.<sup>18</sup>

The World Council of Churches has declared that structural violence is present when:

. . . resources and powers are unevenly distributed, concentrated in the hands of a few who do not use them to achieve the possible self-realization of all members, but use parts of them for self-satisfaction for the elite or

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<sup>17</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, Religion and Violence (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973) 7.

<sup>18</sup>This is the problem of trying to abstract general principles from historical situations or experiences. The problem with such an endeavor is that the abstractions do not represent objective analysis but the perspective of the individual engaged in the analytical process.

for purposes of dominance, oppression, and control of other societies or of the underprivileged in that same society.<sup>19</sup>

Structural violence can be seen in policies that deprive people of freedom and sustenance, thus making revolution an attractive alternative.

This project will not only consider overt forms of violence, such as brutality, terror, and armed force, but will also concentrate on covert forms--i.e., social, economic, and political violence.

Social violence occurs when people are systematically excluded or restrained from full participation in the life of a society. Such exclusion can be seen in racism or sexism. An obvious example is the apartheid policy of South Africa.

Economic violence is present when the livelihood of social classes is dependent upon and exploited by elites who control capital and establish economic policies benefiting their exclusive interests. An example of economic violence is seen in the relationship between the United States and Latin American nations in which corporate economic interests and indigenous elites prosper at the expense of the majority of the people living in that region.

Political violence occurs when elites maintain their authority and control through overt and covert means. An example would be the Guatemalan "war against insurgents" and

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<sup>19</sup>As quoted in Davies, 130-131.

the suspension of constitutional government for the purpose of "restoring order."

Second, the term revolution refers to the use of force<sup>20</sup> to effect fundamental change in a social, economic, and political order that perpetuates systems which are supported by and based on structures of overt and/or covert violence.<sup>21</sup> The key idea in this definition is that of "fundamental change." What I mean by this is a

. . . fundamental change in the nature, the function of government, the principles of economic production and distribution, the relationship of social classes, particularly as regards the control of government.<sup>22</sup>

Revolution is a planned activity which results in a radical, systematic, and categorical change of social, economic, and political systems, and in which the eventual goal is the

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<sup>20</sup>In this project "violence" and "force" are synonymous terms. Usually a distinction is made between these words, but such a distinction connotes a moral judgment. For example, violence is associated with disruptive or illegal behavior, whereas force is employed to protect existing social and political structures against anarchy. Consequently, violence receives a negative connotation, while force is given a positive value. In this project, however, violence and force are descriptive terms that are morally neutral. It is the goals and use of violence or force that determines their relative morality.

<sup>21</sup>This definition is adapted and enlarged from one offered by Richard J. Neuhaus. See Peter L. Berger and Richard J. Neuhaus, Movement and Revolution (Garden City: Doubleday, 1970) 144. Cf. Hannah Arendt, On Revolution (New York: Viking, 1963)

<sup>22</sup>As quoted in Carl Leiden and Karl Schmitt (eds.) The Politics of Violence (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968) 8.



establishment and implementation of alternative structures.

Based on this criterion, three types of violent resistance against political and social authority are rejected as expressions of revolution. The first is a "revolution" in which anarchy is the goal. This approach is rejected because, rather than seeking fundamental change, the goal is to destroy the system. The functions of government and social controls are ignored. The second is a "revolution" that exchanges one elite for another. The coup-de-etat is rejected because it does not bring about fundamental change--it is the same old show with a new cast. And finally, a "revolution" that gains separation from an established government is also rejected. A war of independence fails to meet the criteria because it does not attempt to change existing political, economic, and social systems. For example, the goal of the American war of independence was not to bring about fundamental change in Great Britain but was instead to create a separate political structure.<sup>23</sup>

Revolution is more than protesting, reforming, or ignoring existing systems. It involves the replacement of structures with new alternatives through radical, violent, and relatively rapid means.<sup>24</sup> "It implies an element of

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Arendt who argues that the American revolution is the prototype of modern revolutions.

<sup>24</sup>See Moltmann, 129-147.

rupture with the current social order and the building of a new one."<sup>25</sup>

Violent revolution occurs when people within existing structures strive to bring about fundamental social, economic, and political change and are willing to use violence to achieve this end. In short, a revolutionary situation exists when systematic violence is radically challenged by its victims, and structural violence is confronted by revolutionary force.

Violent revolution is, therefore, both a descriptive and normative concept. It describes a struggle between those desiring the status quo and those desiring change. It also implies a moral concern, however, because it raises the question of when violence may be legitimately employed to challenge existing control and authority. It is within this second category that the church must formulate an adequate understanding of and response to revolution. The problem of violent revolution poses an ethical and theological dilemma for each Christian. "The moral problem then is: in what situations is it right to use force to overthrow the existing structures of a society?"<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Davies, 90.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 129.

## APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

A substantial volume of literature has already been written on a religious interpretation of revolution. Although the various authors represent disparate purposes and perspectives, their approaches can be placed into one of three categories: 1.) historical/traditional; 2.) theological; and 3.) liberation.

### Historical/Traditional

The historical/traditional approach tries to understand and respond to the problem of revolution by analyzing historical revolutions, drawing generalizations, and offering value judgments or appraisals. Some works attempt to be comprehensive in scope, comparing and contrasting various revolutions. Others attempt to focus exclusively on specific revolutions, and still others examine particular themes of revolutionary behavior.

The thrust of this approach represents western methodological and political assumptions that place limitations on their conclusions--they may not necessarily be applicable to the revolutionary context of the Third World. The methodology employed is broadly "scientific." Data is compiled, objectively studied, and conclusions drawn. Although this approach claims objectivity, research and analysis are conducted within the framework of prevalent paradigms and assumptions. New

evidence is "filtered" in order to fit it into existing theories or categories. The practical result is that the historical/traditional approach assumes revolutions are aberrations within a universal political development that places supreme value on orderly governance. Such a belief (and consequential methodology) virtually ignores the possibility that revolutionary struggle is an emerging phenomenon reflecting a growing social and class conflict. Its value is limited for clarifying a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution due to the church's pluralistic composition. In addition, an attempt to place events in the Third World within historical/traditional theories of revolution strips them of their uniqueness and challenge. The contemporary Third World may represent novel conditions requiring new and different methods of analysis.

An example of these methodological limitations can be seen in Hannah Arendt's extensive work entitled On Revolution. According to Arendt, although concern about political governance dates back to the rise of civilization, revolution is a modern phenomenon. The origin of a revolutionary mentality grew out of the Enlightenment's stress on individual freedom. Protestantism's emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and equality of individuals before God paralleled this development. Even though social and economic relationships may be altered in a revolution, they are not substantially changed because the root of revolution lies in the desire to be

liberated from political regimes that restrict freedom. The goal of any revolution is narrowly political and ultimately stems from a desire for personal freedom. Since such opposition against the state is inconceivable without violence,<sup>27</sup> a theory for its justification is paramount but again leads back to a desire for individual freedom. Social and economic change may be appealed to by revolutionaries, but it is merely a thinly disguised justification which is only remotely related to the more pressing concern for freedom.

Although Arendt's analysis is perhaps appealing to the westerner, it reflects biases and assumptions that are not indicative of the revolutionary struggle in the Third World. Her analysis fails for two reasons.

First, to assume that revolutions reflect an individual search for freedom fails to recognize the pervasiveness of long standing inequitable social and economic relationships. Class struggle is virtually ignored as a possible dominant cause. But as historical and economic studies illustrate,<sup>28</sup> the principal problem for the Third World since colonial times has not been the search for personal freedom from political restrictions. Instead, the primary cause of unrest has consistently stemmed from internal confrontations

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<sup>27</sup>See Arendt, 9-10.

<sup>28</sup>See Andre Gunder Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment (New York: Monthly Review, 1969).

between elite and exploited groups of people, and from an external relationship with First World nations. Even the introduction of an "individualistic" Protestantism in Latin America, for example, did not breed a revolutionary ethos based on freedom but only reinforced the historical social and political patterns.<sup>29</sup> The desire for individual liberty is not the motivation for contemporary revolutionary struggle. It is indeed ironic that a cry for "freedom" today in the Third World is usually offered in support of repressive and reactionary policies.<sup>30</sup>

Second, by assuming that revolution reflects primarily --if not exclusively--political relationships, Arendt has relativized goals and action. If individuals are seeking their own freedom, their allegiance with other individuals is temporary and based on pragmatic goals. Relative abuses by an existing regime are relieved, but economic and social relationships are not appreciably altered. Although the actors are different nothing has really changed. As Arendt makes clear, revolution does not search for novelty.<sup>31</sup> Such an assumption, however, suffers from a limited vision. By assuming that revolutionary goals reflect pragmatic political concerns, revolutionary action is reduced to a balancing or cor-

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<sup>29</sup>See Jose Miguez Bonino, Christians and Marxists (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 58-73.

<sup>30</sup>See *ibid.*, 42-57. <sup>31</sup>See Arendt, 18-21.

recting activity which excludes the possibility that something new could emerge in social and economic relationships. When revolutionary events in the Third World are viewed from this perspective, the possibility of novel human relationships are ignored because data is placed in existing categories that are not changeable. The resulting conclusions may be coherent but not necessarily accurate. Using a biblical analogy, this situation is illustrative of the confrontation between the "old" and the "new."<sup>32</sup> The old may see the breaking in of the new but not perceive it in its true significance. The old may even believe itself allied with the new, but due to its linkage with the past, its understanding is clouded and its actions may actually oppose the new.

### Theological

A theological approach to understanding revolution attempts to evaluate the phenomenon within theological categories. Until recently, this endeavor primarily reflected western perspectives. Although this approach will be examined extensively in chapter three, four basic characteristics can be briefly noted.

First, Christian faith is articulated "spiritually" rather than historically. Religion is seen as a private affair, and the principal concern of Christianity is other-

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<sup>32</sup>See Mt.11:2-15, and 2 Cor.5:16-17.

worldly. The domain of religion (and consequently Christians) is within the church. A dichotomy is maintained between the ethics and values of the "spirit" and those of the "world."<sup>33</sup> Religious faith is expressed individualistically or subjectively rather than socially or politically. Revolution is, therefore, of secondary rather than primary importance. The practical result of this approach is a moral quietism and implicit support of the status quo in revolutionary situations.

Second, "thought" is prior to action. Reflecting nineteenth century idealism, revolution is analyzed and critiqued within what are believed to be universal categories. For the theologian, the Bible and particular traditions provide these categories. For example, the thirteenth chapter of Romans or Luther's view of the state are juxtaposed with modern revolutions and evaluated in this light. From this juxtapositioning, ethical behavior can be extrapolated. The result, however, is to ignore the particular demands of a specific context. It is for this reason that theology can be seen as a frivolous or irrelevant enterprise.<sup>34</sup>

Third, "universal" statements are preferred over contextual ones. The human problem or dilemma is identified and

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<sup>33</sup>This dichotomy can be seen in Paul and Martin Luther. For summaries, see Gunther Bornkamm, Paul (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) and Paul Althaus, The Theology of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966)

<sup>34</sup>See Gustavo Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973) 43-77.



applied to everyone regardless of the political, social, and economic contexts. Revolution is then examined and evaluated on its ability to address this "fundamental" problem. For example, Paul Tillich interprets human relationships ontologically. Social, economic, and political relationships are "good" when they enhance a shared "power of being," or "spiritual life."<sup>35</sup> Revolution is understood and critiqued in terms of its enhancing or destroying this power of being. The result is an uncritical acceptance of latent ideologies as universal statements. Tillich, for instance, insists that there is an intrinsic form of the state which cannot be altered by any revolution. "A particular ruler or a particular aristocracy can be ousted. But the place in which they stand is inviolable."<sup>36</sup> Consequently, Tillich's view reflects distinct western ideologies regarding the role of the state which are not necessarily universal in scope or appropriate to specific historical contexts.

Fourth, "order" tends to be identified with the kingdom. Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom is central to Christian ethics. Political, social, and economic institutions

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<sup>35</sup>Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (London: Oxford University, 1954) 100. In this regard Tillich maintains a cyclical view of history which rejects novel possibilities. Cf. Moltmann, pp.19-41, who believes that revolution can achieve unprecedented goals.

<sup>36</sup>Paul Tillich, Political Expectation (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 109.

which best approximate the kingdom are preferred. But it is often assumed that the kingdom can best be approximated within orderly situations, and disorder is opposed to the ethics of the kingdom. For example, John Bennett maintains that "[t]he general background of thought in the New Testament had created a strong religious and theological inhibition against any kind of political resistance."<sup>37</sup> The practical result is that order is preferred in political, social, and economic relationships without articulating its linkage with the ethics of the kingdom. The burden of proof is placed upon revolution, rather than the state, to demonstrate its ability to best approximate the kingdom. Such a bias virtually restricts the kingdom to existing regimes and severely constricts an understanding of eschatology. In short, a preference for order can limit a Christian vision of the future and unduely limit the means to achieve it. It represents a cyclical view of history.

Each of these characteristics represents interrelated trends within a theological approach to interpreting revolution. Such theological analysis has effected our understanding of God, salvation, sin, the church, eschatology, and the role and authority of the state. In chapter three, the relevance of these doctrines will be examined in light of the

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<sup>37</sup> John C. Bennett, Christians and the State (New York: C. Scribner's, 1958) 68.

context of the Third World and the critique offered by liberation theology.

### Liberation

A liberation approach to understanding revolution tries to evaluate the phenomenon by applying theological reflection to concrete situations. Representing Third World perspectives, a liberation approach responds to the theological approach mentioned above. Although the liberation approach will be examined more thoroughly in chapter three, four characteristics can be identified.

First, Christian faith is "historical" rather than spiritual. Religion is a public rather than private affair, and the primary concern of Christianity is this-worldly. For the Christian, there is no sharp dichotomy between the realms of the "spirit" and the "world." Religious faith influences ethics and values, and is expressed socially and politically. From a liberation perspective, history is of central importance--it is in daily human affairs that faith is known and articulated. As Hugo Assmann writes, "Faith is no more or less than man's historical activity."<sup>38</sup> In some historical contexts this will mean that revolution is of primary importance. The practical result is a moral activism that challenges the status quo.

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<sup>38</sup>Assmann, 35.

Second, "action" is prior to thought. Gustavo Gutierrez has identified a two-stage development of theological methodology that has left a permanent imprint upon the church. The first phase emphasized a dependence on wisdom. "It [wisdom] was essentially a meditation on the Bible, geared toward spiritual growth."<sup>39</sup> The second phase emphasized rational knowledge that transformed theology into an "intellectual discipline."<sup>40</sup> Both of these phases were dependent upon Platonic and Aristotelian categories which have left their mark upon modern theology--thought is valued over action, and ethics are divorced from concrete historical experiences. Gutierrez argues that such an approach is not necessarily pertinent to the revolutionary context of the Third World. As an alternative, Gutierrez suggests that the proper function of theology is to reflect on historical praxis--i.e., theology reflects on action in concrete historical contexts rather than on ideas. Theology participates in the historical process rather than attempting to transcend it. It is, therefore, a liberating and transforming enterprise.

Theology as critical reflection on historical praxis is a liberating theology, a theology of the liberating transformation of the history of mankind and also therefore that part of mankind--gathered into ecclesia--which openly confesses Christ. This is a theology which does not stop with reflecting on the world, but rather tries to be part of the process through which the world is transformed.<sup>41</sup>

The result is that action (and reflection) is appropriate for

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<sup>39</sup>Gutierrez, 4.   <sup>40</sup>See *ibid.*, 5-6.   <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

specific contexts. In some instances appropriate action is revolution.

Third, "contextual" statements are preferred over universal ones. A liberation approach believes that traditional theological interpretations of revolution reflect an unwarranted dependence on an idealism that is transformed into universal statements. This procedure, however, produces abstractions that no longer resemble the historical reality they were intended to address. In addition, action is reduced to a secondary consideration. As Jose Miguez Bonino writes:

The classical approach, which is deeply embedded in the theological tradition, conceives truth as the correspondence between certain conceptual formulations and universal ideas or principles. The realm of action corresponds, therefore, to a second level: that of the "consequences" or "inferences" of these truths.<sup>42</sup>

Beyond this, Bonino argues that these abstractions are ". . . unrelated to the conditions of existence of the peoples and groups in which they were conceived."<sup>43</sup> Ethical behavior is reduced to acceptable compromises. A liberation approach insists that theological statements be contextual statements rooted in historical experience. It is theology from the "bottom up" rather than from the "top down." In addition, "universal" statements are not really comprehensive in scope because their articulation is dependent upon specific perspectives and vested interests.

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<sup>42</sup>Bonino, Christians and Marxists, 30. <sup>43</sup>Ibid.

Fourth, a liberation approach questions the meaning and priority of "order" in a revolutionary situation and its relationship to the kingdom. The assumption that government is synonymous with order ignores the experience of the Third World. In many Third World nations political authority is the source of terror and economic exploitation. Law perpetuates behavior that is normally criminal. Consequently, a liberation approach argues that the kingdom can best be approximated in some situations through revolution rather than supporting the existing government. A revolution in this instance would attempt to establish true order by incorporating the church's eschatological vision within concrete historical circumstances. The result is that the burden of proof--vis-a-vis best approximating the kingdom--is distributed equally between existing governments and potential revolutionary movements. In certain contexts, revolution could provide a better basis for approximating the kingdom within a future social, political, and economic order rather than a current regime. A revolution, in this regard, could represent a breaking in of the new within the structures of the old. It is a linear, rather than a cyclical, view of history.

Each of these characteristics represent interrelated trends within a liberation approach to understanding revolution. As such, they present a challenge to traditional theological formulations and offer a critique of traditional understandings of God, salvation, sin, the church, eschatology,

and the role and authority of the state. In chapter three, this critique and its implications for Christian ethics in Third World revolutionary situations will be examined.

The methodology of this project is to apply the approaches discussed above to a situation that simulates the context of the Third World. This shall be accomplished by: 1.) briefly summarizing the historical development of traditional western perspectives on violent revolution; 2.) reviewing selected modern theologians who represent these traditional western perspectives; 3.) critiquing these theologians in light of the context of the Third World and examining the implications for Christian ethics raised by liberation theology; and 4.) providing an educational opportunity in which these applications can be scrutinized.

This methodology raises the problem of the relationship between theology and specific situations--i.e., the effect theological reflection has upon ethical behavior in revolutionary circumstances. As liberation theologians point out, there is often a discrepancy between these two concerns. This project will attempt to provide a bridge between this gap. The intent of this project is, therefore, to apply and evaluate different theological interpretations of revolution to the specific context of the Third World.

### Procedure for Integration and Chapter Outline

This project will attempt to integrate the disciplines of theology and Christian education. Such integration is necessary if First World Christians are to offer a response to violent revolution that is informed by Christian theology and ethics. Such an endeavor, however, must also be appropriate to the context of the Third World. Before theological reflection can begin, contextual realities must be examined and alternatives explored. In addition, both the cognitive and affective needs of the students must be addressed. In other words, First World Christians need an educational device that will stimulate theological reflection within the simulated conditions of the Third World.

These objectives can be met through the use of a simulation game and related curriculum. Simulation games communicate information to students that is relevant to their particular developmental and affective needs. There is both an "objective" and "subjective" dimension.

Simulation games also encourage students to learn facts quickly, participate in a situation that approximates "reality," and draw critical conclusions based on analysis and experience. It is for this reason that simulation games have been used effectively in values education. A variety of cognitive and affective needs are met, therefore, through the employment of simulation gaming methodology. Or as Clark C.



Abt summarizes:

Self-directed learning in games occurs in three, usually successive, phases as a result of active participation and intense involvement of the student:

1. Learning facts expressed in the game context and dynamics;
2. Learning processes simulated by the game;
3. Learning the relative costs and benefits, risks and potential rewards of alternative strategies of decision-making.<sup>44</sup>

The use of a simulation game can also directly address the problem of a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution within the contextual considerations of the Third World. Through the structure of the game, the problem of revolution and its causes can be recreated or simulated. Students will have a sense of participating in the problem itself. Since the game is intended for Christian or religious educational environments, theological reflection will be both explicit and implicit. As mentioned above, this educational venture will hopefully bridge the gap between theology and context. This will be accomplished in the game by placing traditional western theological perspectives on revolution in a simulated situation of the Third World and critically examining their applicability.

The chapters which follow this introduction represent four successive phases of this project.

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<sup>44</sup>Clark C. Abt, "Games For Learning," in Sarane S. Boocock and E.O. Schild (eds.) Simulation Games and Learning (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1968) 78.

Chapter two will focus on the development of historical perspectives. This will be accomplished by examining the church's changing attitudes toward the role and authority of the state and its use of violence. In addition, traditional Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist perspectives on the use of violence against the state will be explored.

Chapter three will examine contemporary theological positions on revolution that are representative of the historical attitudes discussed in chapter two. This will be accomplished by summarizing the work of four theologians-- Helmut Thielicke, Karl Barth, Robert McAfee Brown, and John Howard Yoder. In addition, these positions will be contrasted with selected liberation theologians.

Chapter four will integrate the disciplines of theology and Christian education through the development of a simulation game and related curriculum. This will be accomplished through a discussion of simulation game theory and its relevance for Christian education, and a design for a simulation game. The content of the game and its related curriculum will draw heavily upon chapters two and three.

Chapter five will include a summary of the project and concluding remarks.

## CHAPTER 2

## DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

If an adequate response to violent revolution is to emerge, the historical development of contemporary Christian perspectives must be understood. This chapter will examine the church's changing attitude toward the state, and the use of violence by and against the state.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH'S UNDERSTANDING OF  
THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF THE STATENew Testament Concepts<sup>1</sup>

The state posed a dilemma for the primitive church because of its eschatology and interim ethic. The church expected Christ to return soon and establish an earthly kingdom. These Christians believed they were living between distinct historical epochs<sup>2</sup> and responded with an interim ethic.<sup>3</sup> Political institutions and their related concerns were at best

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<sup>1</sup>Due to the limited scope of this chapter, an examination of biblical imagery will be confined to the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup>Paul refers to the age of the law and the age of the gospel, or the aeons of Adam and Christ.

<sup>3</sup>For a study of Paul's theological ethics, see V.P. Furnish, Theology and Ethics in Paul (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968)

transient and did not command major attention.<sup>4</sup> The state--particularly its political authority--was neither affirmed nor rejected. As a provisional measure, an ethic of tension toward the state developed. This ethic of tension is seen in the New Testament in Jesus' relationship with the Zealots, his eventual condemnation by Pilate, and the teachings of Paul.

Due to the Roman occupation of Palestine, the problem of the role and authority of the state already existed for Judaism. The Christian community rejected prevailing attitudes toward Roman authority. It could not accept the Sadducees collaboration, nor would it join the Pharisees and Zealots in their rejection of the existing political system. The church instead developed a stance which realistically accepted the role of the state while at the same time denied its absolute authority.

Jesus' death as a Zealot<sup>5</sup> indicates a revolutionary position, even though he himself was not a Zealot. This relationship between Jesus and Zealotism is illustrative of the church's ethic of tension. From Rome's perspective Jesus' popular association with the Zealots was clear and dangerous.

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<sup>4</sup> Paul addressed a variety of social concerns such as relationships between slaves and masters, husbands and wives, and rich and poor within the church. He rarely advocated any change, however, for social and political structures. His concern was to develop personal morality within the Christian community rather than a social ethic.

<sup>5</sup> See Oscar Cullmann, The State in the New Testament (New York: C. Scribner's, 1956) 12.

Along with the Zealots, Jesus rejected Roman claims of comprehensive authority--the Emperor's sovereignty was limited. The Zealots, however, were also disappointed with Jesus because of his rejection of political titles.<sup>6</sup> For Jesus the state was not divine, but nor did he support insurrection against it. Jesus' position was one of tension between conflicting political demands. Or as Oscar Cullmann explains, ". . . Jesus' attitude is to be sought beyond any uncritical absolutising of the Roman State, and at the same time beyond any thorough-going political resistance to it."<sup>7</sup>

The portrayal of Jesus' condemnation by Pilate represents the dynamics of this ethic of tension. Jesus rejected the Zealots expectation that he was a political power figure involved in revolutionary struggle. His own self-image was that of the Son of Man or Suffering Servant, not a Messianic King.<sup>8</sup> He neither resisted nor approved Roman authority but lived in tension between these two responses. The state should not make totalitarian demands, but it did have the right to expect to receive what it needed to survive. On the other hand, the Zealots were correct to resist Roman abuses, but their messianic expectation of Jesus was inappropriate. Though Jesus' ethic of tension was consistent with his teachings, it led to his rejection by the Zealots

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<sup>6</sup>See *ibid.*, 24. <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 23. <sup>8</sup>See *ibid.*, 24-26.

and condemnation by Pilate.<sup>9</sup> In the struggle between the Zealots and Rome, Jesus' position was intolerable. To the revolutionaries he represented a tacit support of the status quo. To Rome his withholding of loyalty was insurrection.

The teachings of Paul are similar to those in the Gospels. Paul was certainly no revolutionary, but neither did he advocate absolute obedience to the state. Paul insisted that a Christian's loyalty to political authority was governed by two qualifications. First, love should always respond to evil even though the evil suffered is unjustified. Second, the climax of history was near.<sup>10</sup> The state was willed by God in this interim before the end. It was a temporary institution possessing no divine status. "For the duration of this age the state is willed by God, but it is not divine in nature."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Paul offers practical guidance in specific circumstances. His teachings are not theoretical constructs which anticipate future problems concerning political

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<sup>9</sup>Jesus was also rejected by the Pharisees and Sadducees who held different social and political views. They agreed, however, that Jesus' understanding of political authority was unacceptable. Cf. S.G.F. Brandon, The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Stein & Day, 1968). Brandon argues that Jesus cooperated with Barabbas in an unsuccessful attempt to take political and religious control of Jerusalem. The Gospels represent early Christian attempts to "cover up" this embarrassing episode.

<sup>10</sup>See Cullmann, 57. Cf. Roland Bainton, Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960) 75-76.

<sup>11</sup>Cullmann, 62.

authority, but are tempered by concrete situations. As

Archie Penner argues:

Paul's central intention is not to present a theory of political government, not to write a pattern for the secular state, nor even to describe the true nature of a state, but rather to instruct a Christian community as to its attitude and obligations to the state.<sup>12</sup>

The ethical principles guiding the New Testament church's response to the role and authority of the state can be summarized as follows. First, the church was to give the state what it needed to survive. Second, the church was to watch the state with a critical eye. Third, the church was to deny the state any improper demands--e.g., Emperor worship. For the church of this interim period, its duty was to maintain an ethic of tension in order to avoid the temptation of Zealotism or Rome.<sup>13</sup>

#### Pre-Constantinian Concepts

Prior to Constantine's Edict of Toleration the relationship between the church and Rome was one of intermittent conflict. The hostility between the new religion and the

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<sup>12</sup> Archie Penner, The Christian, the State, and the New Testament (Scottsdale: Herald, 1959) 79.

<sup>13</sup> The temptation of Zealotism is symbolized by Rome's destruction of Jerusalem in response to the Jewish revolution. On the other hand, the temptation of Rome can be seen in the beast of Revelation. Both temptations eventually result in destruction, either through insurrection or unrestrained reaction on the part of the state. The symbols of Rome and Jerusalem indicate the parameters within which the church's ethic of tension existed.

established political order was inconsistent, alternating between periods of peace and oppression.

Between the waves of acute persecution, there were long intervals of relative tranquillity in which a sort of tacit modus vivendi was permitted to form between the Christians and the Roman State.<sup>14</sup>

There were two reasons for the hostility that was directed toward the church.

First, in living out its ethic of tension the church appeared subversive. Because it did not give unqualified support to the Empire, refused to serve in the military,<sup>15</sup> did not engage in Emperor worship,<sup>16</sup> and its relative secretiveness,<sup>17</sup> Rome viewed the church as a "counter-culture" advocating treason. The Empire was generally tolerant of different religions within its borders, but in return it demanded absolute loyalty and obedience. Because of the church's belief in Christ's Lordship, it could not live up to this Roman expectation. Thus, its ethical stance of tension with the state caused outbreaks of violent persecution.

Such a response by Rome, however, reflected its own ignorance of Christianity and a pretentious understanding of

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<sup>14</sup>Sidney Z. Ehler, Twenty Centuries of Church and State (Westminster: Newman, 1957) 6.

<sup>15</sup>See Bainton, 67-74.

<sup>16</sup>See Ehler, 4-9, and T.M. Parker, Christianity and the State in the Light of History (New York: Harper, 1957) 32-35. Cf. Bainton, 74-75.

<sup>17</sup>See Parker, 22-31.



political authority. Most Christians regarded themselves as supporters of Rome in matters where the demands of Caesar were legitimate and necessary. Christians prayed for (not to) the Emperor and believed that the state he represented played a needed role in the world--if it were not for Pax Romana, the proclamation of the faith would be hampered by anarchy. Furthermore, the church did not counsel revolution either within its own community or for others. It did, however, advocate that Christians should withhold selected loyalties (e.g., Emperor worship, military service, etc.). The church was perceived as a parallel, but closed, society which challenged the ultimacy<sup>18</sup> of the prevailing political system. By Roman standards it was the Christians who were idolaters.

The second reason for hostility directed against the church is closely related to the first. Due to the political tension between Rome and the church, a social stigma was attached to Christians. For example, when Christians refused to participate in Emperor worship they were viewed as outcasts and misfits. Social ostracism followed political persecution. Social cohesion was of paramount importance to the Empire and was symbolized in the personification and deifica-

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<sup>18</sup>The deification of the Emperor promoted political cohesion in the Empire. This lent an ultimacy to Roman values and political authority which transcended cultural differences. It was this claim of ultimacy that the Christians challenged through their refusal to participate in Emperor worship. See Ehler, p.5.

tion of the Emperor. Such cohesion was built on the premise that the "One Empire" was personified in a single individual.<sup>19</sup> Religious toleration gave way at this point--Emperor worship unified and symbolized the Roman world. For Christians, this demanded too much since it was they--not the state--who formed the "One Church" and worshiped the true Lord. The state was limited in its religious sovereignty. But for Rome, "[r]eligion was not conceived as a private matter or as the affair of any organisation other than the State itself."<sup>20</sup> A refusal to participate in Emperor worship was a display of intolerable bigotry. Christians were the enemies of civilization.

#### Post-Constantinian Concepts

Starting with Constantine, the influence and acceptability of the church grew<sup>21</sup> until Christianity became the religion of the Empire.<sup>22</sup> With an enhanced political and social position, the church's understanding of the role and

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<sup>19</sup>The only exception to the policy of universal Emperor worship were Jews living in Judea. The reason for this policy was pragmatic due to the politically volatile history of the region. See Parker, 33-34.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 23.

<sup>21</sup>See *ibid.*, 43-64, and Bainton, 85-86. Cf. Gustavo Gutierrez and Richard Shaull, Liberation and Change (Atlanta: John Knox, 1977) 5-26.

<sup>22</sup>Edict of Thessalonica in 380.

authority of the state evolved from an ethic of tension to an ethic of close identification with and responsibility for political leadership. A brief historical survey, up to the Reformation, will illustrate this change.

With the collapse of the western Empire<sup>23</sup> and its break up into smaller political units, the church's role changed dramatically. Rather than being a distrusted, minority religion, Christianity became the sole unifying factor. Only the church transcended western political differences. The church believed that a single Christendom (in place of a single Empire) was ruled by two perfect societies that shared a common goal but performed different functions.

. . . there are two societies, called perfect societies, Church and State. Each has its own hierarchy and its own law. The State takes care of the external conditions needful for human welfare, whereas the Church is concerned with the spiritual aspect of that welfare, and with the life of grace in the souls of men.<sup>24</sup>

The post-Constantinian church preserved the "myth" of Roman solidarity, and Christian faith replaced Emperor worship as the symbol of a common social and cultural heritage. The church's ethic of tension changed to an identification with prevailing political, social, and economic authority. The problem for the church was no longer how to convince the

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<sup>23</sup>For a description of the relationship between church and state in the Byzantine Empire, see Ehler, 11-12, and Parker, 65-80.

<sup>24</sup>Ehler, 16.

state of its legitimacy but how to best divide the responsibilities of the two societies.

With the rise of feudalism came the ascendancy of the church and its attempt to establish a Papal theocracy.<sup>25</sup> The church gradually assumed greater political influence as Europe decentralized. Theologians reasoned that since Christ had given both of the "swords" to the church, their proper administration belonged to the Pope. It was assumed that since the salvation of souls was more important than the mundane affairs of temporal governance, the Papal See should represent a spiritual and political center of authority for Christendom. Consequently, decentralized political leadership throughout western Europe had to seek its legitimacy from Rome. The conflict between Gregory VII and Henry IV was symbolic of the church's ability to rule in both realms.<sup>26</sup> The factors needed for ecclesiastical domination existed in feudal Europe --an institutional church separate from any particular state, and a socially and economically decentralized Europe.

It is not difficult to see how in such an atmosphere the idea of the Church as an institution separate from the State and possessed of its own authority--an idea ultimately derived from the Biblical notion of the Kingdom

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<sup>25</sup>See *ibid.*, 23-37, and Parker, 99-119. Both agree that the church reached the zenith of its political power during this period, but their conclusions present a contrast. For Ehler, feudal Europe was the golden age of the church, whereas Parker believes that the church's moral behavior and motivation was at best suspect.

<sup>26</sup>See Ehler, 31-34.

of God--could develop into that of the church as an im-perium in imperio. For the Church had a history infinitely longer and more impressive than that of the feudal fief. It could claim independence with far better title than any feudal landlord.<sup>27</sup>

In its attempt at theocracy the church claimed that all political authority lay within its jurisdiction. The church would assign roles to political leaders as it saw fit. The Pope would appoint and dispose leadership as he pleased--a political power broker who dispensed and collected "loans" as necessary. The theoretical distinction between spiritual and temporal power was abandoned. The primary question was: "Does the Emperor hold his power directly from God or only mediately through the Pope?"<sup>28</sup> The church answered in favor of the latter, for as Sidney Ehler writes:

. . . our Lord gave all power on earth to the Church, which she holds in such a way that she exercises the spiritual power directly, whereas she leaves--or, better--she lends the exercise of the temporal power to the kings. But if she lends this power to the kings, she retains the right to supervise its exercise and to intervene--by way of the hierocratic jurisdiction--in case of its abuse.<sup>29</sup>

At the zenith of its influence the church reserved the right to grant political legitimacy and to interfere with, and even replace, leadership when its "loan of power" was "abused." Through Papal theocracy, the church and state became one.

With the Renaissance, however, secular leaders reacted against their subordinate position. They realized that

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<sup>27</sup>Parker, 105. <sup>28</sup>Ibid., 114. <sup>29</sup>Ehler, 33-34.

". . . the State must either dominate the Church or be dominated by it."<sup>30</sup> Increased nationalism and the resurgence of centralized political authority effectively challenged the church's monopoly on temporal control. This revolt against Papal influence was gradual,<sup>31</sup> but it had a profound impact upon the church's understanding of the role and authority of the state. There were three reasons for the collapse of Papal theocracy.

First, the church tried to maintain its spiritual neutrality while at the same time politically maneuver in its own self-interest. ". . . [T]he Church, of which the Papacy was the head, was never ready to disentangle itself from the secular community it professed to judge."<sup>32</sup> Second, extravagant Papal claims that its will was law placed Rome in direct competition with national leaders who also claimed divine right and enjoyed strong support from their citizens. Third, the church lost credibility by claiming a universal moral authority, yet acting as a political power broker operating in its own self-interest.

The church responded to these limits upon its influence by recognizing that secular political authority was necessary. There was also a tacit acceptance of a variety

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<sup>30</sup>Parker, 119.

<sup>31</sup>Concluding with Napoleon in the nineteenth century.

<sup>32</sup>Parker, 125.

of governments with which the church maintained different relationships. It was, to a limited degree, a return to an ethic of tension--but an ethic that was neither obligatory nor systematic. It was a tension that was adaptable, and largely determined by changing circumstances and contexts. The church would mold itself to evolving political, social, and economic conditions as necessity dictated.

### Reformation Concepts

The social, political, and economic breakup of Medieval Europe was followed by religious upheaval. During the sixteenth century three Protestant perspectives on the role and authority of the state emerged--Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist. Each viewpoint differed with one another, and all were opposed to traditional Catholic views. Each of these Protestant perspectives will be briefly examined.

Martin Luther believed that God's created order is governed by two kingdoms: the kingdom of the right hand (the government of Christ) and the kingdom of the left hand (secular government). Although there is a basic unity between the two kingdoms, because they are both established by God, they perform different functions.<sup>33</sup> However with this functional division of responsibilities, there is also a mutual

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<sup>33</sup>See Paul Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972) 54-56.

dependence. The kingdom of Christ can only exist in a world of law and order, and peace exists in a nation where the gospel is correctly proclaimed. Individual Christians participate in both kingdoms, resulting in a double standard of behavior. As Paul Althaus explains:

Viewed in terms of his activity, a Christian man is indeed a double person functioning in a twofold office and living under a twofold law. His activity has a twofold form. These two cannot be harmonized, since even God's government is not a unit but appears in the double form of spiritual and secular kingdoms or governments. The Christian stands in two areas of activity.<sup>34</sup>

Though Christians maintain a dichotomy of activity, they recognize that obedience to political authority is nearly synonymous with obedience to God.

When we obey the emperor, we are basically obeying God himself. We are here involved not with "two masters" as in Jesus' statement about Mammon, but with one God; the only distinction is that we at one time obey him directly and at another time indirectly.<sup>35</sup>

Luther's two kingdoms ethic provides the framework for his understanding of the role and authority of the state. The state is a creation and gift from God. Its function is to protect the innocent and punish the wicked, creating an environment in which Christian faith can be proclaimed. Therefore, ". . . those who govern sit in God's place."<sup>36</sup> The Christian is grateful for the state: "The Christian ought to be particularly thankful to God for the gift of government,

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>35</sup>Martin Luther as quoted in *ibid.*, 78. <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 113.



through which he graciously preserves human life."<sup>37</sup> Obeying and respecting political authority is exhibiting a work of love in which those governed are ". . . obeying God himself."<sup>38</sup>

Although government is divinely ordained, its authority is limited. It cannot make demands which belong only to God, nor can it restrict the teachings of the church. But if abuse occurs, the state retains a legitimacy which should be respected by Christians. Resistance is not an option. "Outrage is not to be resisted but endured."<sup>39</sup>

To summarize, Luther argued that the primary functions of the state are the administration of law and order, waging of just warfare, and the maintenance of social order. The duty of the church is to provide a ministry to political officials which includes advocating obedience to God, preaching, and calls to conscience.<sup>40</sup> For Luther, the role of the state is affirmed and shared by the church because they share a common origin and purpose. The church, therefore, is under a divine mandate to support and obey the state.

The Reformed tradition retains much of Luther's

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 119. <sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Martin Luther as quoted in *ibid.*, 130. Cf. Luther's concept of the limitation of a soldier's obligation to fight in an unjust war. See *ibid.*, 124-129.

<sup>40</sup>See *ibid.*, 147-151.

concept of the two kingdoms, but marked differences exist concerning the implications of the relationship of the kingdoms. Although both church and state share a responsibility for sustaining a Christian society, the church, as an institution, and individual Christians are duty bound to correct abuses by the state. As Parker argues:

. . . to Calvin the State is more than just a policeman set up by God to control the criminal class of non-Christians or nominal Christians, as Luther tended to think; it is a society planned by God to promote and enforce the Christian religion.<sup>41</sup>

Consequently, there is more stress on ecclesiastical independence. The church can be a social critic when necessary.

Within this relationship of institutional separation yet social solidarity, Calvin believed that the church had four tasks. First, ". . . the church must pray for the political authorities."<sup>42</sup> By praying for the state, Christians exhibited a trust in God's providence. Second, ". . . the church must encourage the state to defend the poor and weak against the rich and powerful."<sup>43</sup> Unlike Luther, Calvin believed that the church had the duty to advocate social and political policies. Third, the church should call on the ". . . political authorities for help in promoting true

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<sup>41</sup>Parker, 157.

<sup>42</sup>W. Fred Graham, The Constructive Revolutionary (Richmond: John Knox, 1971) 61.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

religion and even enforcing ecclesiastical disciplines."<sup>44</sup> Since political and ecclesiastical authority shared a common purpose, the state should promote and maintain the Christian faith. Fourth, the church should criticize the authorities when they are wrong. "So the minister, the 'mouth of God,' has the duty of speaking out sharply against all injustice, all neglect of duty, all ungodliness in high places."<sup>45</sup> For Calvin, the minister and the magistrate worked in a close, yet separate, relationship.

Building on Calvin's concepts,<sup>46</sup> John Knox expanded the idea of Christian responsibility for secular government. Calvin had insisted that responsibility for the state lay in the hands of Godly magistrates.<sup>47</sup> Knox, however, argued that all Christians--regardless of their social or political status--had a responsibility for civil governance.<sup>48</sup> In the following century, Oliver Cromwell and John Milton would further expand this argument. Christians (i.e., the elect) not only had a responsibility for secular government but were

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 62. <sup>45</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>46</sup>Also Bullinger's. See Dan G. Danner, "Resistance and the Ungodly Magistrate in the Sixteenth Century," Journal of the American Academy of Religion, 49 (1981) 471-481.

<sup>47</sup>See John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) II, 130-142.

<sup>48</sup>See Eustace Percy, John Knox (Richmond: John Knox, nd) 271-286.

obliged to establish and sustain a holy commonwealth.<sup>49</sup> Although the Christian lived in two kingdoms, no attempt was made to keep them radically separated--indeed, one was obligated to intervene in the affairs of the state to insure a proper governance of God's creation. The state's "divine status" depended upon its ability to incorporate Christian principles in its methods and forms of government.

To summarize, Reformed leaders believed that church and state played different roles but possessed a common authority. In this relationship the church was not subordinate to the state since Christians must, on occasion, be political critics. Accordingly, the church accepted the necessity of the state and granted it a conditional authority. Knox, Cromwell, and Milton expanded this concept to include a Christian responsibility for secular government and an obligation to establish a holy commonwealth.

Categorical statements about Anabaptist perspectives require two qualifications. First, unlike the "magisterial"<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>See Danner, 479, and Lawrence Stone, The Causes of the English Revolution 1529-1642 (New York: Harper & Row, 1972)

<sup>50</sup>The term was first used by Franklin H. Littell in his book The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism (New York: Macmillan, 1964). The term is used to differentiate the classical Reformers from the more radical Anabaptists. According to Littell, the term is preferable because the major difference between them was their ecclesiologies, particularly their different understanding of the relationship between church and state.

Reformers, the primary concern of the Anabaptists was not to articulate a systematic understanding of the state but to develop an ecclesiology<sup>51</sup> that was radically faithful to the New Testament model.<sup>52</sup> Second, I recognize the controversy surrounding the proper meaning of the term "Anabaptist." A variety of historical movements and individuals have been artificially lumped together in this category.<sup>53</sup> For the purpose of this project, Anabaptism is broken into "pacific" and "violent" perspectives. This distinction will be maintained throughout this project.

Although pacific Anabaptists rejected the post-Constantinian synthesis of church and state, they accepted the implicit necessity of secular government. The state was a divine response to human sin, and its principal function was to keep order. In this regard they shared the viewpoints of other Reformers but differed in the restrictions they placed on the political use of power. As Dale Brown explains:

Their fundamental departure from the prevailing view came in formulating the limitation of the government's power.

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<sup>51</sup>Closely connected with their ecclesiology was the belief that the kingdom of God was close at hand. For a summary of the relationship between Anabaptist ecclesiology and eschatology, see *ibid.*, 79-137.

<sup>52</sup>See *ibid.*, 46-77. Cf. Torsten Bergsten, Balthasar Hubmaier (Valley Forge: Judson, 1978) 16-18.

<sup>53</sup>For summaries of this problem, see Bergsten, 12-16, and Littell, xiii-xviii. Cf. James M. Stayer, Anabaptists and the Sword (Lawrence: Coronado, 1972) xi-xxiv.

Whereas for the classical Reformers the state was the defender of faith, the punishment of dissenters being necessary for the preservation of order, the Anabaptists denied the authority of the state in the spiritual realm. Because faith cannot be compelled, they believed that government oversteps its function when it attempts to rule over conscience.<sup>54</sup>

Although the state performs a needed function in a sinful world, it is not a major concern of the church. The state wields the sword and is, therefore, a coercive and violent institution. Such activities as police actions and warfare are inconsistent with Christian behavior; ". . . it is necessary to have countercommunities which are free from the coercive hand of the state in matters of faith."<sup>55</sup> In these countercommunities obedience owed to God is exhibited in contrast to what is owed to Caesar. Volunteerism is the mark of the church in its noncooperation with the state. The New Testament ethic of tension is largely recovered in this perspective. The role of the state is tacitly accepted, but its authority is restricted to what it can legitimately demand of Christians. The church would simply not participate in the secular governance of society.

The principal interest for violent Anabaptists was the coercive function of the state. The use of the sword had divine sanction and was to be used to protect the good and

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<sup>54</sup>Dale W. Brown, "The Radical Reformation: Then and Now," Mennonite Quarterly Review, 45 (1971) 256.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

punish evil. The state had a monopoly upon its use only as long as the sword was used correctly. If used incorrectly the state became godless, and the church should not only resist it but seek its destruction. As Thomas Muntzer indicated:

The princes are not lords but servants of the sword. If these servants turn out to be unreliable, the sword will be taken from the princes and given to the zealous common people for its appointed purpose, the destruction of the godless.<sup>56</sup>

For violent Anabaptists the sword was the symbol of God's authority. It should be used in a crusade against all ungodliness as a means to prepare the world for the approaching kingdom.

According to Muntzer, the sword's effective use by the state was a sign of divine favor. Its use, however, was not confined to government officials (unlike Lutheran, Reformed, or pacific Anabaptist perspectives). Violence could be used by the church against its opponents. The state was viewed from an ethical position of dynamic neutrality. Government could be either good or evil, thus determining Christian support or insurrection. The role of the state, therefore, is flexible, and its authority depended upon its acceptability of God's elect. In principle, the church is the ultimate source of divine governance on earth because it is charged with the responsibility ". . . to make certain that

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<sup>56</sup>As quoted in Stayer, 76.

the wicked did not obstruct the salvation of the good."<sup>57</sup>  
Civil government is a transient institution that exists until the kingdom is established through the sword of the elect.

When these Protestant views on the role and authority of the state are compared, some interesting contrasts emerge.

From a Lutheran perspective the relationship between spiritual and temporal concerns is symbolized by the two kingdoms. The ethical stance of the Christian is to live in a dichotomy between the demands of these kingdoms. The state is a gift of God, and its purpose is to maintain law and order. The duty of the individual Christian toward the state is obedience, and the church is obligated to provide a ministry for political leaders. If the state is unjust, the Christian must endure.

From a Reformed perspective the two kingdoms are maintained, but the ethical stance of the Christian is interdependent--one realm depends upon and may intervene in the affairs of the other. The state is ideally a holy commonwealth, and its purpose is to preserve justice and order. The duty of the individual Christian toward the state is conditional obedience, and the church is obligated to assist (and correct) the state in a mutual governance of society. If the state is unjust, the church must work to correct the abuses.

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<sup>57</sup>Stayer, 90.



Pacific Anabaptists believed that spiritual concerns are more important than temporal ones. The ethical stance toward the state is quietism because of its secondary status. The state represents a response by God to sin, and its purpose is to maintain order. The duty of the individual Christian toward the state is noncooperation with its coercive purposes, and the church is to live in tension with the demands of secular government. If the state is unjust, the church is called to suffer.

Violent Anabaptists believed, along with their pacifist counterparts, in the priority of the spiritual over the temporal. But this priority resulted in an ethical stance of activism rather than quietism. The state is a temporary evil, and its purpose is to wield the sword as a symbol of God's authority. The duty of the individual Christian toward the state is one of dynamic neutrality. However, the church is obligated to bring in the kingdom, and if the state is unjust, the church must resist and destroy it.

Thus far we have examined the church's understanding of the role and authority of the state from the New Testament period through the Reformation. Diagrams 2.1 and 2.2 schematize the various perspectives. As I will show later,<sup>58</sup> these perspectives on the role and authority of the state have

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<sup>58</sup>See chapter 3.

Diagram 2.1  
PRE-REFORMATION PERSPECTIVES ON  
THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF THE STATE

	<u>New Testament Church</u>	<u>Pre-Constantinian Church</u>	<u>Post-Constantinian Church</u>
Spiritual/ Temporal:	Spiritual over temporal	Spiritual over temporal	Spiritual dominates temporal
Ethical stance:	Quietism	Quietism	Supremacy
Nature of the state:	Necessity for interim period (Neutral)	Response to sin (Negative)	Theocracy (Positive)
Purpose of the state:	Maintain order	Maintain order	Govern under the direction of the church
Duty of the individual to- ward the state:	Limited compliance and selective non- cooperation	Limited compliance and selective non- cooperation	Obedience
Obligation of the church toward the state:	Prayer/tension	Tension	Provide direction or guidance
Response to unjust state:	Suffering	Suffering	Resistance: with- hold "loan" of power

Diagram 2.2  
REFORMATION PERSPECTIVES ON  
THE ROLE AND AUTHORITY OF THE STATE

	<u>Lutheran</u>	<u>Reformed</u>	<u>Pacific Anabaptist</u>	<u>Violent Anabaptist</u>
Spiritual/ Temporal:	Two kingdoms	Two kingdoms	Spiritual over temporal	Spiritual over temporal
Ethical stance:	Dichotomy	Interdependence	Quietism	Activism
Nature of the state:	Gift of God (Positive)	Holy commonwealth (Positive)	Response to sin (Negative)	Temporary evil (Negative)
Purpose of the state:	Law and order	Justice and order	Maintain order	Wield the sword
Duty of the individual toward the state:	Obedience	Conditional obedience	Noncooperation	Dynamic neutrality
Obligation of the church toward the state:	Ministry	Mutual governance	Tension	Work for the kingdom
Response to unjust state:	Endurance	Correction	Suffering	Revolt

effected Christian responses to revolution. However, before this effect is explored, the development of historical Christian attitudes on violence employed by the state must be examined.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE

According to Roland Bainton, "Broadly speaking, three attitudes to war and peace were to appear in the Christian ethic: pacifism, the just war, and the crusade. Chronologically they emerged in just this order."<sup>59</sup> Prior to Constantine pacifism was the exclusive Christian ethic. With the collapse of Rome, Augustine articulated the just war doctrine. In the middle ages the church adopted the crusade. In addition to this chronological development, Bainton argues that these three ethical attitudes have consistently reappeared in church history. This section will summarize the development of these attitudes.

#### Pacifism

Prior to 170-180 there is no evidence of any Christian serving in the Roman army.<sup>60</sup> Roman military might was symbolic of political demands that the church refused to endorse. The reason for its nonparticipation was the church's radical

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<sup>59</sup>Bainton, 14. <sup>60</sup>See *ibid.*, 67-74.

ethic of love of neighbor. The love of neighbor meant that Christians could not take human life under any circumstances. "Concretely, the early Church saw an incompatibility between love and killing."<sup>61</sup> As the church gained social acceptability and its eschatology changed, however, Christian participation in the military increased.

In the pre-Constantinian church Bainton identifies three types of pacifism.<sup>62</sup> The first was a "legalistic and eschatological" type represented by Tertullian. Radical obedience to Christ demanded complete abstinence from violence. The second type represented a Gnostic disgust with all physical concerns. Violence was an "earthly" concern to be avoided. The third type of pacifism, represented by Origen, was "pragmatic or redemptive." "It took cognizance of life on earth and of social consequences and responsibilities, but objected to war in part because there was a more excellent way."<sup>63</sup> These different styles of Christian pacifism developed early in the church and reoccurred throughout its history.

During the Reformation pacific Anabaptists represented a legalistic and eschatological pacifism. Because of their radical discipleship, they refused to participate in any form of overt violence. The Quakers adopted a similar but less rigorous position in Britain. Some medieval mystics

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., 77. <sup>62</sup>See *ibid.*, 81-84. <sup>63</sup>Ibid., 83.

and monastics adopted a Marcion type of pacifism. Erasmus and the Enlightenment reflected a pragmatic and redemptive approach.

In the modern era these three styles still claim adherents. The historic "peace Churches" maintain a witness against institutional violence, and pacifist mystics have enjoyed a limited popularity. Twentieth century pacifism, however, has been primarily represented by a pragmatic approach, as witnessed in such issues as the disarmament programs between the world wars, the nuclear disarmament movement, and the civil rights movement in the United States. Leading representatives for this style of pacifism have been Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Just War

When the church was joined with the Empire, the Constantinian synthesis faced a new ethical dilemma regarding the state's use of violence. The previous concept of disparate ethical codes governing church and state (i.e., Christian and pagan) was no longer tenable. Since the Christian faith was now the religion of the realm, it assumed responsibilities heretofore unknown. If the Empire was Christian, its moral behavior--including its use of violence--must be properly motivated and executed. It was Augustine who first faced this dilemma.

Augustine based his response on a theological analysis

of sin.<sup>64</sup> Christian perfection could never be achieved on earth due to humanity's fallen nature. Ethical behavior could only attain a limited approximation of justice because of the taint of sin. Although violence was sinful, it was also a necessary function of the state for preserving order and defending its citizens from invasion. The Christian, as a responsible citizen, was obligated to protect the political and social system which best approximated the ethical demands of the gospel. Augustine concluded: "The empire was Christian. The church was able to give guidance. Some semblance of justice might be realized. Therefore the empire was to be defended and Christians might fight."<sup>65</sup>

The conduct of war, however, must be guided by well defined criteria. Augustine articulated a code upon which relative justness could be measured. He concluded that war was just when: 1.) The intent was to restore peace; 2.) Justice was vindicated; 3.) It was used as self-defense; 4.) It was waged by proper political authority; and 5.) Its conduct was governed by restraint and limited objectives. When these criteria were met the state could wage war, knowing that

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<sup>64</sup>The specific context for Augustine's concern was Alaric's sacking of Rome in 411. See *ibid.*, 93.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 95.

relative justice was on its side of the struggle.<sup>66</sup>

Augustine's doctrine of the just war was later replaced with the crusade of the middle ages. It would resurrect again, however, in the Renaissance and Reformation. In modern times Bainton argues that ". . . the mood of the Second World War approximated that of the just war."<sup>67</sup> Paul Ramsey has also used the just war doctrine in his examination of nuclear warfare.<sup>68</sup>

### Crusade

The church in the eleventh century moved from the just war to the crusade. Based primarily on Old Testament imagery, the move coincided with the attempt to establish a Papal theocracy. The crusading mentality reasoned that since Christendom was righteous, violence employed by the state need not fall under ethical restraints when used against enemies of the faith. Particularly when the aim was to restore order or enforce the peace, violence assumed a holy characteristic.

Implicit in these attempts to enforce the peace was the idea of a crusade, that is to say of a war conducted

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<sup>66</sup>For a summary of Augustine's view, see *ibid.*, 95-100. Cf. Paul Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience (Durham: Duke University, 1961) 15-33.

<sup>67</sup>Bainton, 15. Cf. his own analysis of World War II, 221-228.

<sup>68</sup>Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience.



under the auspices of the Church for a holy cause--the cause of peace.<sup>69</sup>

The use of violence itself took on a religious connotation. Monastic pacifism was largely replaced by such military orders as the Templars and the Knights of St. John.<sup>70</sup>

At first the crusade was used to keep peace within Christendom. The church (in cooperation with political leaders) assumed the responsibility to protect society against error and heresy. The brutality of such persecution was based on love. "The motive was love for the heretic and concern for his eternal salvation as well as love for those whom he might lead to damnation."<sup>71</sup>

It was only a matter of time, however, until the crusade was against external enemies--particularly the Turks. Since Christendom embodied truth and holiness, conflict with pagans was best met with unrestrained warfare. The cause of Christian Europe was synonymous with the cause of God. The confrontation was between good and evil, and those representing the true faith should not be fettered by self-imposed restraints. It would be irresponsible not to eliminate God's enemies. Consequently, Augustine's concept of relative justice was abandoned. Love for God's world demanded a Christian domination of it; ". . . no consideration could be paid to

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<sup>69</sup>Bainton, 111. <sup>70</sup>See *ibid.*, 114. <sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 116.

humanity when the honor of God was at stake."<sup>72</sup>

The crusade lost much of its appeal in the late Medieval period but was later influential in various circumstances and contexts. The Wars of Religion were largely fought as crusades. In the Reformed tradition the crusade was used as a means for the elect to exhibit their election.

"... [T]he Church consisted approximately of the elect, an identifiable company, in some sense a kingdom of God on earth, with a commission to establish holy commonwealths, whether by persuasion or constraint of the ungodly."<sup>73</sup>

American manifest destiny and British imperialism were also expressions of election. In addition, Bainton identifies the crusading mentality as the attitude which guided the conduct of World War I in the modern era.<sup>74</sup>

Some generalizations can now be offered on the church's attitudes toward violence, and their relationship to the various perspectives on the role and authority of the state.

The early church's ethic of tension produced a pacifism that was the normative Christian position. As the church enjoyed social acceptability, however, different attitudes emerged. With the Constantinian synthesis the church assumed greater political and social responsibilities. Its ethic toward violence evolved from pacifism to the just war. The

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., 145. <sup>73</sup>Ibid., 143. <sup>74</sup>See *ibid.*, 15

Medieval attempt at theocracy produced the crusade. With the Reformation a variety of views developed concerning both the relationship between church and state, and the use of violence --pacifism, the just war, and the crusade all had their advocates. Since the Reformation these various attitudes have reappeared, and different historical periods have witnessed their ascendance and collapse. The chronological development of Christian attitudes toward violence, and their relationship to different perspectives on the role and authority of the state can be seen in diagrams 2.3 and 2.4.

The prevailing assumption behind these historical perspectives has been that only established political authority can use violence to protect its citizens from invasion and maintain internal order. A critical question remains unanswered: Can violence be used to remove an existing regime, and if so, what would be the church's role (if any) in this revolution? Historical Christian responses to this question will be examined in the following section.

Diagram 2.3  
CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD VIOLENCE

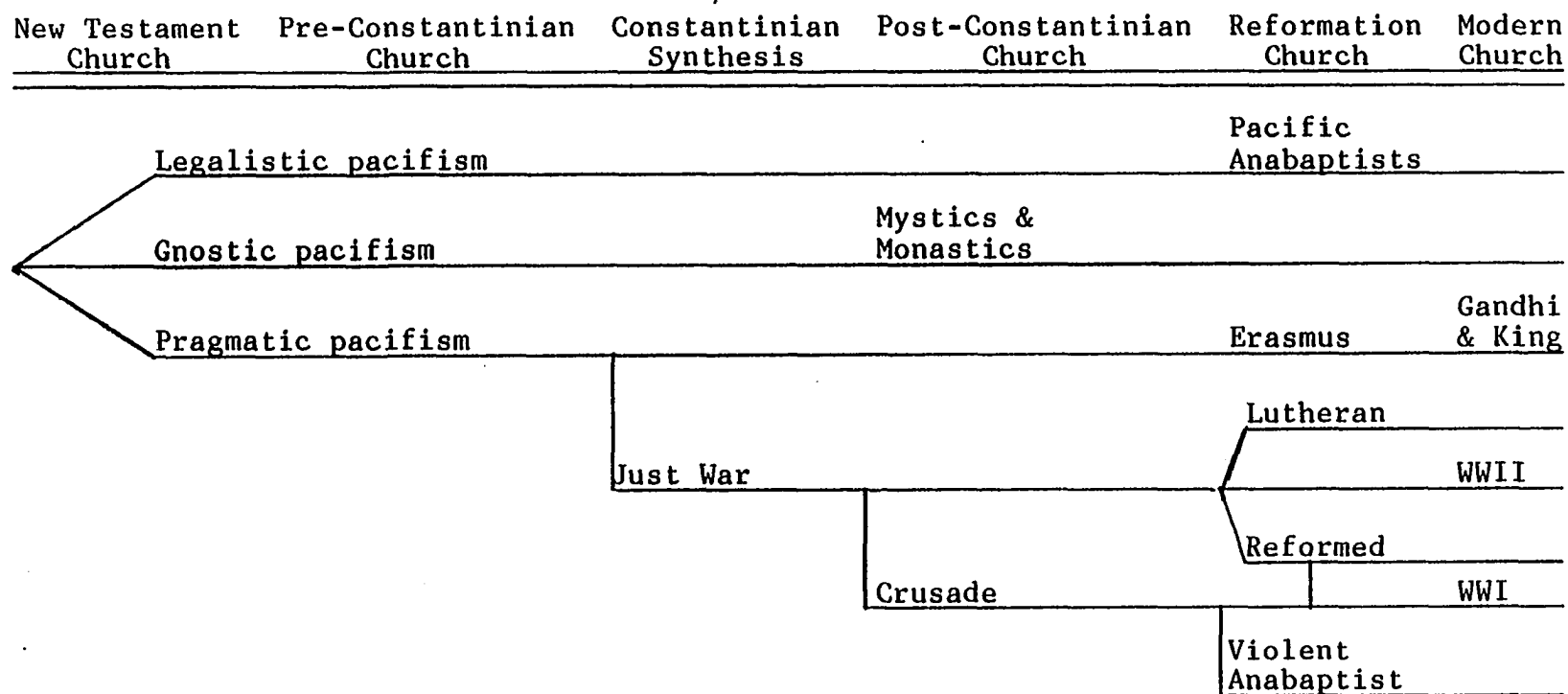


Diagram 2.4  
CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD THE STATE AND VIOLENCE

	<u>Role of the State</u>	<u>Authority of the State</u>	<u>Relationship with the State</u>	<u>Attitude toward Violence</u>
New Testament Church:	Temporary	Limited	Tension	Pacifism
Pre-Constantinian Church:	Divine response to sin	Limited	Tension	Pacifism
Post-Constantinian Church:	Subordinate to church	Dependent on church	Dominance (theocracy)	Just war/ crusade
Lutheran:	Divinely ordained	Comprehensive	Two separate kingdoms	Just war
Reformed:	Divinely ordained	Limited	Two interdependent kingdoms	Just war/ crusade
Pacific Anabaptist:	Divine response to sin	Limited	Tension	Pacifism
Violent Anabaptist:	Wield the sword	Dependent on its behavior, vis-a-vis the elect	Dynamic neutrality	Crusade

## DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL WESTERN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON REVOLUTION

This chapter has thus far examined the church's understanding of the role and authority of the state, and the church's response to violence employed by the state. Although some tentative answers to the problem of violent revolution have been implied, a more thorough examination of the church's attitudes toward violence employed against the state is required.

To directly examine the problem of revolution--from a historical perspective--moves this project to an important transition. Rather than emphasizing chronological developments, as in the previous sections, I will instead examine general theological principles which emerged within Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, and Anabaptist traditions.

### Roman Catholic

The problem of violent revolution posed two dilemmas for Catholic theology. First, in the pre-Constantinian church violent opposition to the state was ruled out, due to its pacifism and interim ethic. When persecuted by the state, Christians accepted their suffering as a mark of faith. Resistance occurred only by denying the state demands it illegitimately expected. Even though the state may make intolerable demands and unjustly persecute the church, its coercive power was to be met with faithful suffering.

Existing political authority was tacitly accepted and was not to be overthrown, since the church did not possess a comprehensive political theory. Selective resistance--not revolution--was the only option.

The second dilemma emerged in the post-Constantinian era and was more complex. If the synthesis of church and state was complete, how could Christians revolt against a Christian government? In theory, violent revolution was not an option in such a society. Given political realities, however, the church did oppose governments that stood in the way of ecclesiastical policies or perpetuated doctrinal error. For example, in its attempt to build a Papal theocracy the church would withhold its "loans" of power from dissident governments. If an anathema was pronounced against a monarch, his subjects were no longer obligated to obey or serve him. The church acted as a moral judge of political activities and personalities. In the Wars of Religion this attitude was used against Protestant leaders, and their citizens were urged to wage crusades against them in order to restore the true faith.

However, even if the church lost its moral influence, or if Christians found themselves subject to brutal and pagan regimes, violent revolution did not necessarily follow. For example, according to Aquinas, a Christian was not required to participate in an unjust war. Although the individual soldier may justifiably refuse this order by the state, it

did not imply that citizens had the right to oppose existing leadership (that made unjust demands) for political control.<sup>75</sup>

. . . [E]ven the theoretical possibility of resisting the prince's official decision did not mean that fully legitimate authority for initiating the use of armed force rested with private individuals, or any group of them.<sup>76</sup>

In other words, even an unjust regime possessed an authority greater than individuals or groups when it came to using violence. There may be extremely rare times when armed revolt was justifiable, but the weight of moral theology and natural law favored existing political authority. It was not the prerogative of individual citizens to oppose their government. Violence could only be used by the state to maintain peace and order. It could not be legitimately employed by citizens to initiate sweeping social, political, and economic changes. Or as this example written by Paul Ramsey illustrates:

St. Peter did wrong in cutting off the ear of the high priest because he had not been ordered to do so; and--to the extent that we may describe Jesus' action in this-worldly terms--he did not resist, even by means of legions of angels, not because he was a pacifist, but because he recognized that those who came to arrest him had the sole authority to use armed violence, justly or unjustly.<sup>77</sup>

Revolution was simply an unjust form of internal war and, therefore, not permissible.

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<sup>75</sup>See Ramsey, 115. <sup>76</sup>Ibid. <sup>77</sup>Ibid., 114.



### Lutheranism

For Luther, revolution was a question of civil obedience, and he offered an unqualified answer: Secular government, or the kingdom of the left hand, was not to be resisted by citizens who were also subjects of the kingdom of Christ. In this division of responsibilities, the church was charged with spiritual duties and was incompetent to intervene in secular affairs. Spiritual concerns took preference over secular ones, and revolution was not only rebellion against divine authority but was also trivial.

Temporal power is but a very small matter in the sight of God, and too slightly regarded by him for us to resist, disobey, or become quarrelsome on its account, no matter whether the state does right or wrong.<sup>78</sup>

Violent revolution could not be condoned by Luther, and his objections were tied closely with his theological understanding of obedience owed to the state and his desire for social order.

According to Luther, the state was a gift from God given to preserve the order of creation. Political leaders ruled with divine commission. "For all the offices of government, from the highest to the lowest, are orders created by God, and like everything else that he has created are good."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Martin Luther as quoted in Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther, 57.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 113.

Luther's theology plainly granted the state a peternalism that could not be legitimately challenged.<sup>80</sup>

The proper attitude of a Christian toward the state was gratitude and obedience as a "work of love."<sup>81</sup> Such loving obedience precluded any attempt at insurrection.

Because the Christian honors and supports the government, he also does not become involved in the complaints about the government which are so popular among the people of this world, that is he avoids the "secret backbiting" and evil slanders, which people use to arouse opposition to the government.<sup>82</sup>

Since only the state could use violence, its use against political authority was simply not an option for the church. Ultimately only God could judge leaders, not other mortals who must fulfill their stations in life through obedience to the state.<sup>83</sup> ". . . Christians should even obey an evil and tyrannical government which corrupts the country and the people."<sup>84</sup> Those who did resist the government (even

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<sup>80</sup>Luther's understanding of the state is based on his view of the family in which the father is the absolute head. The state (and its prince) is, in many ways, an extension of the family. For a summary of Luther's ethical understanding of the family, see *ibid.*, 83-100.

<sup>81</sup>In a world corrupted by sin and bordering on anarchy, any government is a good and beneficial thing according to Luther. See *ibid.*, 119.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, 119-120.

<sup>83</sup>There were, of course, limits to this obedience such as participation in an unjust war. For a summary of these limitations, see *ibid.*, 124-132.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 130.

tyrannical ones), according to Luther:

. . . resisteth God, for they are in the room of God; and they that resist shall receive damnation . . . neither may the inferior person avenge himself upon the superior or violently resist him, for whatsoever wrong it be.<sup>85</sup>

Luther's theological understanding of and response to violent revolution was cautious and conservative, due largely to his reaction to the peasant's revolt. Luther was horrified that his doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was used by the leaders of the revolt to justify revolutionary violence. In response, Luther argued that God willed that absolute temporal authority should be concentrated in elite rulers. No one beneath them could challenge their authority. Christians could only offer their quiet service, never their opposition. Even in unjust situations the church should endure and hope for a better future. But they could not participate in shaping that future if it meant their involvement in the violent upheaval of existing social, political, and economic institutions. Only God could truly construct the future because the actions of revolutionaries were never beneficial in the long run. As Althaus summarizes:

Luther does not grant the right to rebel even when the prince breaks the laws he has sworn to uphold. Seen in the long perspective, all revolutions have cost heavily and brought their own vengeance. Revolutionaries dream that they are going to improve the world, but men who

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<sup>85</sup>As quoted in Davies, 51.

overthrow the government succeed only in changing the government, not improving it.<sup>86</sup>

From Luther's perspective, if revolution swept a society, Christians were obligated to support order. The church was an agonized observer who quietly and prayerfully supported the regime which governed God's creation in the temporal realm.

### Reformed

The Reformed response to the problem of revolution was more qualified and diverse than Luther's. Order and proper governance was preferable to anarchy, but specific regimes could be violently resisted and overthrown if certain criteria were met. The evolution of such thinking can be seen in Zwingli, Calvin, Beza, and Knox.

Ulrich Zwingli's career led him from pacifism to a position identified by James Stayer as "Christian Realpolitik."<sup>87</sup> From his pacifist perspective, no violent opposition to political authority could be entertained. But as Zwingli's sense of nationalism grew, he supported Switzerland's struggle for independence. His belief in "correct independence" was tempered by a conservative insistence that the goals of a true church and state were synonymous. Both the ruler and

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<sup>86</sup>Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther, 132.

<sup>87</sup>See Stayer, 49-69.

the ruled had a joint responsibility to build a Christian society. Christians, therefore, should only be content with a Christian ruler. However, resistance against a pagan tyrant was always balanced by the Christian concern for maintaining divine order in the world; ". . . the believing subject should refuse to sin on command of the ruler, but should leave the punishment of wicked governments to God."<sup>88</sup> Zwingli never counseled armed revolt. Resistance, not revolution was permissible.

John Calvin accepted the basic premises of Zwingli but gave them greater clarity. Calvin maintained that church and state were ". . . one single community organised in two different ways."<sup>89</sup> Calvin shared with Zwingli an overriding concern for Christian social responsibility in creating a Christian society. Calvin believed that the church should be a voice of conscience for Christian ethical principles. The church, therefore, must maintain its independence from the state in order to exercise its freedom of expression. The church was a constructive force which worked with the government (often as a needed critic) in social, political, and economic reconstruction rather than against existing structures. For example, Calvin never advocated that the Huguenots revolt against their Catholic monarch. Calvin's theology, however, did provide the basis for the concept of

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 67.    <sup>89</sup>Parker, 158.

self-determination<sup>90</sup> which would have revolutionary consequences in later years.

It was with Theodore Beza and John Knox that Calvin's thinking was applied to specific contexts and used to justify violent revolutions by Reformed Protestants against Catholic monarchs. Prior to Beza and Knox revolution was unthinkable because of theological doctrines concerning divine providence. As Dan Danner explains:

Simply put, God rules the world in and through kings, governors, and rulers. The question of abuse of office made no difference; if rulers were evil, it was God's way of punishing his people.<sup>91</sup>

Beza maintained, however, that a series of social contracts or obligations existed within civil government in a hierarchical order. If the higher rulers failed in the performance of their duties, the lesser magistrates were within their right to oppose or even depose their superiors. As Parker elaborates:

. . . the power of the civil magistrate comes ultimately from the people, and that they are bound to the fundamental laws of their realms by a social contract with their people, the violation of which takes away their right to obedience. Not that private individuals have a right to rebel, but the subordinate civil authorities possess a right and a duty to oppose and, if necessary, to depose a tyrant.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup>The concept of self-determination represented a radical break from fatalism. For a discussion of the ethical implications of self-determination, see *ibid.*, 156-158, and Graham, 157-173.

<sup>91</sup>Danner, 471. <sup>92</sup>Parker, 162.

At the same time, Knox was advocating a similar but more elaborate scheme for revolution in Scotland. According to Knox, oppressive civil and religious leaders needed to be deposed, through violent means if needed, because the people had a right to live and prosper in a true Christian commonwealth. Knox made two distinctions regarding responsibility for initiating insurrection. The lesser magistrates were responsible for reforming or purifying religion within a nation. The people, however, were charged with the responsibility to establish Christian political, social, and economic structures. Revolution implied a thorough change within a society.

Knox went beyond either Calvin or Zwingli by advocating a Christian obligation to overthrow governments which could not govern in a truly faithful manner. Christians were not only obligated to withhold obedience from an unjust regime, but to revolt against it. Suffering caused by a tyrant was not an indication of divine judgment but a call for the elect to assume their rightful responsibilities. Unlike Luther or Calvin, the state did not possess divine authority--its value was functional.

Those in authority are intended by God to preserve the peace and to punish the wicked. If these functions are not performed, the ordinance stands, despite men's unfaithfulness, but the rulers are to be resisted.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Davies, 58.

Or as Knox wrote: "To resist a tyrant, is not to resist God nor yet his ordinance."<sup>94</sup> It was with the revolution in Scotland, and later in England, that Knox's theological principles were applied to specific contexts and used to justify violent revolution.

### Anabaptists

Anabaptists comprised the "left wing" or "radical" dimension of the Reformation. Because of the diversity within the movement, it is difficult to identify generalizations concerning Anabaptist attitudes toward revolution. Franklin Littell argues that Anabaptists represented a spectrum that ranged from pacifist spiritualists to revolutionary "Maccabees."<sup>95</sup> The movement included the revolutionary Thomas Muntzer, the moderate Balthasar Hubmaier, and the pacifist Menno Simons. Anabaptists combined their attempt to restore New Testament Christianity with a fervent eschatology. As Littell observes:

. . . Anabaptism was primitivist and eschatological. The norm is the past, the hope for the future is the Restitution of the Early Church. There is on the one hand an attitude which is conservative, even reactionary; on the other there is a revolutionary spirit which can burst the most secure of ecclesiastical or social forms.<sup>96</sup>

Pacific and violent Anabaptists shared three basic

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<sup>94</sup>As quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup>Littell, 28-29. <sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.



assumptions: 1.) The state was sinful, and its role and authority was limited. It was a temporary institution that would be replaced in the future by the kingdom of God. 2.) The church was a voluntary association of the elect rather than a state religion. The church needed to recover its New Testament heritage of an identity separate from the state. 3.) There was an urgent emphasis upon eschatology. The kingdom of God was coming soon, and its approach had concrete importance for Christian ethics--particularly the problem of violent revolution.

Pacific and violent Anabaptists differed over the means to achieve these goals. One group was exclusively pacifistic while the other conducted a holy crusade. This resulted in diametrically opposing views on revolution. These differences can be examined by comparing and contrasting their views on the state, the church, and eschatology.

First, pacific Anabaptists believed that the state had divine authority to govern the nonelect. This authority, however, did not extend to the church. Government was part of the fallen world and was not a work of God's salvation. Because of the fallen condition of the world, the sword was given to the state as "an office of wrath."<sup>97</sup> Christians, therefore, should obey secular rulers except in matters of faith or conscience. Since the magistrates used the sword to

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid., 105.

enforce civil law and wage war, no true Christian (who was pacifist) could participate in government. Consequently, the church ". . . could do no other than withdraw from all political life."<sup>98</sup> It had to remain apolitical. As a result, pacific Anabaptists did not develop a philosophical understanding of government, and its ethic toward the state was "passive obedience"<sup>99</sup> or noncooperation in matters of conscience.

For violent Anabaptists the state did not have divine authority to govern the elect. A state which was not based on the law of the New Testament<sup>100</sup> was the Antichrist and should be opposed by the church. No distinction was made between secular and religious governance. "All oppression in the world, both secular and religious, was to be violently overthrown."<sup>101</sup> The sword was not given to the state but belonged to the elect as an instrument of their salvation in preparation for the kingdom of God. The state should be obeyed only if it is just. For violent Anabaptists, their response to political authority did not include withdrawal or separation but a responsibility to revolt and reestablish a godly government. Radical revolution was a Christian vocation if it led to the building of a state governed by the elect. Rather than apolitical, the church's activities should demonstrate its desire to establish social and economic structures

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<sup>98</sup>Bainton, 156. <sup>99</sup>Littell, 105.

<sup>100</sup>See Stayer, 78. <sup>101</sup>Littell, 8.

based on biblical principles. Such a program, for example, can be seen in the Peasants War and the formation of the "New Jerusalem" at Münster.<sup>102</sup> Instead of passive obedience, the state should be judged by the elect. If it was found wanting, Christians could revolt against it.

Second, Anabaptist attitudes toward revolution were reflected in their ecclesiologies. Pacific Anabaptists tried to restore a primitive church based on a New Testament model. The ethics of this restored community should reflect a literal attempt to live out Jesus' teachings. The primary concern of the church, therefore, was its distinctiveness from the world. "They were concerned first of all with the purification of the Christian witness, separating the True Church from power and political interest."<sup>103</sup> Since the world of power and political interest did not share its faith, the church should expect to be persecuted. Indeed, persecution was a mark of the true church.

The Anabaptists taught, as indeed they experienced, that the Christians must expect persecution and exile, for this was the inevitable lot of those who submitted to Christ and would not wrestle for political control.<sup>104</sup>

In response to this persecution, pacific Anabaptists articulated a theology of suffering as a means of salvation and a repudiation of the revolutionary tactics pursued by violent

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<sup>102</sup>See Stayer, 227-280.

<sup>103</sup>Littell, 103. <sup>104</sup>Ibid., 107.

Anabaptists. As Littell argues:

Thus the Anabaptists developed a theology of suffering, transforming the persecuted remnant into a triumphant church, rich in historical significance and bringing the means of present salvation. The idea of suffering became their moving power and hope in the Third Age, a refined and nonviolent parallel to the revolutionary conquest conceived by the radicals at Münster.<sup>105</sup>

Consequently, pacifism was the principal goal (rather than a means) for the Christian to imitate Christ. Since Christians looked forward to the return of their Lord and the establishment of his kingdom, they would prepare the way through suffering as a "pilgrim church." Revolution was simply not a faithful role for the church to perform.

Violent Anabaptists combined Old Testament imagery with an apocalyptic eschatology.<sup>106</sup> They emphasized political concerns rather than spiritual ones. Instead of a persecuted minority, the church was a revolutionary elite on the vanguard of a new age. Persecution was not a mark of faith but a sign that the faithful should rebel. Rather than a theology of suffering, violent Anabaptists proclaimed resistance and revolution. The way for the kingdom of God could not be prepared through pacifism because the sword was needed to separate the elect from the heathen. As Stayer explains, "The idea that the power of God alone would bring the triumph

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 132.

<sup>106</sup>The violent Anabaptists in Münster combined the imagery of the "new Davidic kingdom" with the establishment of the kingdom of God. See Stayer, 250-252.

of the Gospel was a half-truth, because the Sword was the instrument of God's might."<sup>107</sup> Rather than a pilgrim church quietly waiting, violent Anabaptists saw themselves as a crusading church preparing the earth to receive the kingdom. Revolution was the role the church should play in such an endeavor.

Third, because Anabaptists stressed the recovery of the primitive church, they viewed the world and its institutions eschatologically. As Littell clarifies:

Because primitivism is not necessarily a theory of origins but really a device for passing judgment on contemporary society, it is closely linked with views of the future. Eden is also Utopia. The imagery of the lost Paradise reverberates through apocalyptic visions of the book of Revelation. In the Left Wing, primitivism leads straight into eschatology.<sup>108</sup>

The different eschatological visions of pacific and violent Anabaptists helped to determine their respective rejection and acceptance of revolution.

Pacific Anabaptists expected the kingdom of God to be created by miraculous and nonhistorical means. Consequently, they were patient and developed an ethical quietism regarding the powers of this world. Salvation was an extra-historical reality that resulted in a pacifist life style. The principal duty of the Christian was to restore the church to its New Testament purity. The peace of the restored church would prepare the world for the kingdom, and vengeance against the

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid., 77. <sup>108</sup>Littell, 51-52.

wicked (those who persecuted the elect) was the prerogative of Christ. Although the new Jerusalem would someday be a reality, it could only be established after Christ's return. Revolution, therefore, was an inappropriate response to temporal concerns, and it would only hinder, rather than prepare, the way for the establishment of the kingdom.

The dominant mood of violent Anabaptists was apocalyptic and chiliastic. Christ would return soon if the elect would seize political power. Salvation was a temporal reality that was experienced in the violent overthrow of the present wicked age. Rather than simply restoring the church, Christians were called to restore all creation (i.e., political, social, and economic institutions). It was an utopian vision that could only be realized through the use of the sword in removing those who stood in the way--the princes and magistrates. Vengeance did not belong to Christ but to his elect. Christ could only return after the faithful had built the new Jerusalem. Revolution, therefore, was a needed response to temporal affairs because it was the means to establish the kingdom.

To summarize, Catholics believed that a proper relationship between church and state could only exist in a Christian society (i.e., Christendom). The ultimate authority to use the sword or employ violence resided in the state. If Christians were subjected to an unjust regime, their response

could be limited resistance or revolution in rare circumstances. Using Bainton's categories for violence, the dominant attitudes toward war were the just war and the crusade, whereas the dominant attitudes toward revolutionary violence were pacifism and, occasionally, crusades by Catholic citizens against Protestant leaders.

For Lutherans the relationship between church and state was symbolized by the two kingdoms. The sword could only legitimately be used by the state, and the Christian response to an unjust regime was patience. The dominant ethic toward war was the just war, and the proper response to revolutionary violence was pacifism by the "agonized observer."

There was great diversity among representatives of the Reformed tradition. Zwingli and Calvin believed that church and state were synonymous but organized differently. The use of the sword was restricted to the state. The Christian response to an unjust state was either limited resistance (Zwingli) or reform (Calvin). The dominant ethic toward war was the just war, and the reaction to revolution was a pacifism resulting in "correct independence" (Zwingli) or a reformed society (Calvin).

For Beza and Knox, however, the relationship between church and state depended on the circumstances. Christians should cooperate with a Christian state but should resist a government when the practice of "true" religion was prohibited

(responsibility of the lesser magistrates), or when the laws of the nation were not being upheld (responsibility of the people). The ultimate authority for the use of the sword lay with the elect, who were justified to use it against an unjust state. The dominant ethic toward both war and revolution was the crusade, which led to either the protection or creation of a state governed by the elect.

For pacific Anabaptists the relationship between church and state was characterized by tension. Although the use of the sword was always sinful, it could be used by the state because of the fallen condition of the world. The response of the church to an unjust state was selective noncooperation, which resulted in persecution and suffering. The dominant ethic toward war and revolution was an absolute and legalistic pacifism which led to a withdrawal from society.

Violent Anabaptists viewed the state as their enemy--the Antichrist. The elect possessed the authority to use the sword against governments that persecuted the true church. The dominant ethic toward war and revolution was the crusade, which would result in the establishment of the kingdom and a new age.

These comparisons and contrasts are schematized in diagram 2.5.



Diagram 2.5

## TRADITIONAL WESTERN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON REVOLUTION

	<u>Relationship between church &amp; state</u>	<u>Authority for the sword</u>	<u>Response to unjust state</u>	<u>Dominant war ethic(s)</u>	<u>Dominant ethic(s) toward revolution</u>
Catholic:	Christian state	The state	Limited resistance/ Revolution	Just war	Pacifism/Crusade against Protestant leaders
Lutheran:	Two kingdoms	The state	Patience	Just war	Pacifism/Ago- nized observer
Zwingli/ Calvin:	Synonymous-- organized differently	The state	Limited resistance or reform	Just war	Pacifism/Correct independence
Beza/Knox:	Conditional	The elect	Revolution	Crusade	Crusade/Govern- ment by the elect
Pacific Anabaptist:	Tension	The state (due to sin)	Noncoopera- tion/suffer- ing	Pacifism	Pacifism/With- drawal
Violent Anabaptist:	Enemies	The elect	Revolution	Crusade	Crusade/Apoca- lyptic

## CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY WESTERN THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS  
AND THEIR CRITIQUE BY LIBERATION THEOLOGY

We come now to the second phase of this project--an examination of contemporary theological positions that have grown out of the historical attitudes toward the state and violence as explored in chapter two. In that chapter we saw that the Christian understanding of and relationship to the state has changed over time. These changes influenced the church's attitude toward violence. As it accepted greater social responsibility, the use of violence received closer scrutiny. With the exception of the pre-Constantinian church and the pacific Anabaptists, violence was acceptable when employed by the state. Revolutionary violence, however, was viewed with skepticism, and its chief advocates came from the Reformed and violent Anabaptist traditions.

These various historical attitudes toward the state and the use of violence imply different theological assumptions that directly influence contemporary understandings of and responses to violent revolution. Modern theological reflection on revolution has largely grown out of these historical traditions and experiences. Their applicability to the context of the Third World is, therefore, problematic.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine and critique modern western theological views on revolution in light of

the context of the Third World. This will be accomplished by: 1.) summarizing the positions of four modern western theologians, and 2.) critiquing their positions from the perspective of liberation theology.

#### CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGICAL POSITIONS WHICH HAVE GROWN OUT OF THE WESTERN CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS

This section will summarize the theological position on revolution held by Helmut Thielicke, Karl Barth, Robert McAfee Brown, and John Howard Yoder. Three criteria were employed in choosing these individuals as representatives of modern western perspectives. First, each assumes that Christian faith affects social, political, and economic relationships. Second, each has examined violent revolution as a possible Christian response to unjust social, political, and economic structures. Third, each of their dissimilar conclusions reflect different assumptions about God, sin, salvation, ecclesiology, and eschatology which can be compared and contrasted.

These theologians have either been influenced by or have drawn upon the historical traditions examined in chapter two. Thielicke utilizes Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms to examine the dubious character of revolution. Barth uses the Reformed tradition to articulate a relationship between repentance and revolution. Brown draws upon the Catholic understanding of the just war in support of a just revolution

ethic. Finally, Yoder applies pacific Anabaptist principles to formulate a nonviolent revolutionary witness.

### Helmut Thielicke: The Dubious Character of Revolution

Thielicke's social ethics<sup>1</sup> are based primarily on Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms. Consequently, questions regarding political, social, and economic structures are secular concerns and not properly those of the church. Within secular ethical categories issues concerning resistance against the state are treated as "borderline situations."<sup>2</sup> All borderline situations are dubious in character because they challenge governmental authority that is vital to the order and proper function of the secular kingdom.

According to Thielicke, the state possesses divine authority, but it stands ". . . under the reservation of a Nevertheless."<sup>3</sup> This "Nevertheless" means that government is a result of sin--an emergency response on the part of God to the fall. But the state still plays a role in salvation, and obedience by its citizens is obligatory.<sup>4</sup> With this premise in mind, Thielicke makes two assumptions concerning borderline

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<sup>1</sup>My source is Helmut Thielicke, Theological Ethics (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) II: Politics.

<sup>2</sup>See *ibid.*, II, 42-43. <sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 332.

<sup>4</sup>According to Thielicke, the "average citizen" is required to suffer under a repressive regime as a form of Christian duty. See *ibid.*, II, 324.

situations. First, within the secular kingdom political order is essential--chaos and anarchy must always be avoided. Second, evil must be resisted when it originates from a dubious source.<sup>5</sup>

Based on these assumptions, Thielicke argues that there are four possible forms of resistance. First, in a democracy opposition to the state is legal and orderly. Political parties are formed which present alternative viewpoints. Second, within totalitarian regimes resistance is always illegal. The state represents all legitimate values which cannot be challenged. Resistance is treasonous. Third, in a totalitarian state resistance may be legitimate if it attempts to transform a perverted state into a true government. "Its legitimacy will be shown by the fact that it is not anarchical or marked by group egoism, but is exercised in the name of the successor government which is to be."<sup>6</sup> Fourth, resistance that leads to anarchy is both illegal and illegitimate and should always be avoided.

Within the context of resistance a specific revolutionary act may be either acceptable or unacceptable from an ethical perspective. An acceptable revolution would affirm

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<sup>5</sup>Thielicke is not clear why he limits resistance to evil only when its source is "dubious." He does maintain, however, that "passivity" by the Christian in this situation incurs moral guilt. See *ibid.*, II, 324.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 331.

the state, or at least the principle of a proper state. Regardless of this potential acceptability, however, all revolutions are of dubious character for three reasons.

First, there is a residue of authority in any and all governments. Since all governments are part of the secular kingdom, their existence and function reflect divine approval. If a revolt does occur, it must be in response to an extreme "peculiarity" such as madness by a political leader. Such a peculiarity must also be indicative of an entire system or regime and not just a series of isolated events. "The peculiarity here referred to includes more than merely individual defects. It has to do with the utterly questionable character of particular persons and systems."<sup>7</sup> It is a question, therefore, of whether there is sufficient criteria to determine if a system is deficient or if its use is defective. If the system is defective then revolution may be warranted, but if the leadership is defective, the proper response is reform and new leadership

Second, revolution is a complex activity that involves duplicity, deception, and compromise on the part of its participants.<sup>8</sup> Such actions are accepted by revolutionaries as morally correct, but their acceptance is not resolved without a sense of guilt. Revolution must be motivated by a love for neighbor. As a result, guilt is incurred by the use of

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., II, 333. <sup>8</sup>See *ibid.*, II, 335-339.

violence.<sup>9</sup> Before revolution becomes an option, the effects of violence should be considered and the cost carefully evaluated. Thielicke then suggests ". . . that revolution is appropriate, if at all, only in cases of extreme emergency."<sup>10</sup>

Third, the anarchic consequences of revolution make all such endeavors morally questionable.<sup>11</sup> As the new order seeks to consolidate its power, anarchy results. The revolutionary is a zealot whose mentality is not easily changed. The revolutionary may actually stand in the way of the goals of the revolution. "[T]he revolutionary naturally tends to foster permanent instability, and hence to stand as an obstacle between the act of revolution and its goal."<sup>12</sup> Revolutions may alter the world but they do not necessarily improve it.

According to Thielicke, the dubious character of revolution is compounded by the facts that perverse regimes retain an element of authority, and order is always preferable to anarchy.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, Thielicke maintains that in extreme cases revolution may be legitimate as a last resort.

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<sup>9</sup>Cf. Luther's teaching on the guilt of a soldier who fights in an unjust war. See Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther, 127.

<sup>10</sup>Thielicke, II, 339. <sup>11</sup>See *ibid.*, II, 340-341.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 340.

<sup>13</sup>In principle, the role of the Christian is to always honor the state. See *ibid.*, II, 342.

There are, however, specific premises that determine an "extreme case."<sup>14</sup>

One such premise is the availability of a successor government. A new regime must be ready to assume power and be an improvement over the old. This exchange of power must be accomplished through political means and not by any effort on the part of the church.<sup>15</sup> Another premise is the ripeness of the situation. The revolution must have an obvious chance for quick success. "The existing but tottering government must be outwardly so shaken that only an additional push is needed to bring its fall."<sup>16</sup> Related to these premises, Thielicke also argues that a revolution must reflect a legitimation by the people as a whole.

A third premise for a legitimate revolution, if it be directed against the totality of a system, is that it be supported by the totality of the people, i.e., by the clearly discernable will of the whole nation and not just by one group with its special interests.<sup>17</sup>

Until now, very little has been said about the role of the church in a revolutionary situation. Thielicke maintains that since the church represents the spiritual kingdom, it cannot play a legitimate role in a revolution. The church

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<sup>14</sup>For a summary of these ethical premises, see *ibid.*, II, 342-348.

<sup>15</sup>The church cannot be an alternative government because it would require mixing the responsibilities of the two kingdoms.

<sup>16</sup>Thielicke, II, 346. <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*



can never engage in revolutionary acts or offer itself as a successor government. It may criticize specific measures undertaken by the state,<sup>18</sup> but the church can never condone the use of violence to undermine the state. To approve the use of violence would be irresponsible because subversive acts would negate any positive aspects of the existing regime, and violence would be directed against innocent individuals.<sup>19</sup> The proper role of the church, therefore, is prayer rather than resistance. As the revolution evolves, however, the Christian community should accept under its care those participants who acknowledge the guilt that results from all acts of insurrection. "The church can only take the troubled conscience of the conspirator into its pastoral care, and declare forgiveness to him who is conscious of his guilt before God."<sup>20</sup>

At this juncture, Thieliicke argues that traditional Lutheranism has attempted to stay clear of revolutions but accepts the result when they occur. Thieliicke maintains, however, that due to the modern situation such an attitude is questionable. The object of revolution must always be

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<sup>18</sup>The church, as an institution, has the moral obligation to protest against specific policies or activities of the state. This obligation has implications for individual Christians in revolutionary situations. For a discussion of these implications, see *ibid.*, II, 350-375.

<sup>19</sup>Due to the indiscriminate nature of revolutionary violence.

<sup>20</sup>Thieliicke, II, 338.

considered in every situation. The individual Christian should be viewed as a mature person who may see moments when the state must be resisted. Thieliicke allows for the possibility that the Christian, as a citizen of both the secular and sacred kingdoms, may feel obligated to participate in selected revolutions. The church, therefore, should encourage a sense of social responsibility among its members, but institutional involvement in the affairs of the secular kingdom is never legitimate.<sup>21</sup>

To summarize, revolution is always questionable in character but may be legitimate in extreme cases. A revolution must always affirm the principle of an orderly state. Revolutionary acts should be governed by the following premises: 1.) There is an available successor government; 2.) The situation is ripe; and 3.) The will of the people is being expressed. The role of the church in revolution is prayer and pastoral care. If Christians feel obligated to participate in a revolution, they do so as individuals and not as representatives of the church.

#### Karl Barth: Repentance and Revolution

Within Barth's ethical framework on political, social,

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<sup>21</sup>See *ibid.*, II, 360-367.

and economic concerns,<sup>22</sup> the central question is this: at what point is the church concerned about justice?<sup>23</sup> Barth maintains that within the Reformed understanding of scripture there is both divine and human justice. Authority and law rests on this dual source of justice and is expressed through a divine providence that protects humanity from the consequences of sin. This providence is seen in Barth's Christology--it is in Christ that divine and human justice find their unity. This unity of justice in Christ provides the basis for Barth's understanding of the relationship between repentance and revolution.

According to Barth, the state is an "angelic" power which can become demonic. In such a situation the church is called to suffer. However, through its suffering the church assumes responsibility for society, as symbolized in its prayers offered in behalf of secular leaders. Furthermore, there is a measure of hope for the church in this suffering because through the state's demonic injustice, God's righteousness is fulfilled.

The state, as an angelic power, plays a role in salvation. The state exists to maintain order and administer justice. Since the state performs a role in salvation, the

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<sup>22</sup>My source is Karl Barth, Community, State, and Church (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968)

<sup>23</sup>See *ibid.*, 101-107.

Christian should obey its laws and acknowledge that its authority is ordained by God. "Clearly this is because in this authority we are dealing indirectly, but in reality, with the authority of Jesus Christ."<sup>24</sup>

The state is also indicative of Christian eschatology. Christian hope lies in a new order symbolized by the kingdom of God. In the New Testament this new order is described as a political reality. A heavenly state will exist on earth--a city of eternal law. The present state is, therefore, an indication of this eschatological hope, and all states will eventually help build the new Jerusalem.<sup>25</sup>

. . . [T]he heavenly Jerusalem is also a State, and every State, even the worse and most perverse, possesses its imperishable destiny in the fact that it will one day contribute to the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem, and will inevitably bring its tribute thither.<sup>26</sup>

There are two problems, however, concerning the relationship between church and state. First, the state may do too little. The state may fail to exert its authority to maintain order and administer justice. When this occurs anarchy and injustice results. Barth uses the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate as an example: "In this encounter of Pilate and Jesus the 'demonic' State does not assert itself

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 122.

<sup>25</sup>In this sense the church and the state share a common destiny.

<sup>26</sup>Barth, 125.

too much but too little; it is a State which at the decisive moment fails to be true to itself."<sup>27</sup>

The second problem which the church may face is a state that usurps too much authority. The state becomes a pseudo-church that demands total loyalty from its citizens and provides all their values. An example would be the state portrayed in the biblical Revelation.

In order to avoid these problems, Barth believes that a mutual guarantee should exist between church and state. This mutual guarantee is based on the premises of protection and prayer--the state protects the church and the church prays for the state. If the state fails to live up to its part of the mutual guarantee (e.g., punishing the good or rewarding evil), then the church is obligated to remind the government of its role within God's salvation and providence. Although the state exists outside the church, Christians (who participate on both sides of the mutual guarantee) are responsible for its conduct. For Barth, this responsibility provides an ethical framework for evaluating situations where the state no longer honors its part of the guarantee. In other words, it is at this point that Barth's theological interpretation of the relationship between church and state (and their unity in Christ) provides some ethical implications regarding revolution.

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 113.

As mentioned earlier, the essential service that the church provides for the state is prayer. Thus, the state is reminded that it is not divine but stands under God's sovereignty. Ecclesiastical responsibility to the state is not decreased by an unjust regime but instead increased. The Christian, therefore, respects political authority in principle because it is a divine creation.

It is possible, however, that the state may oppose God.

[T]he possibility may arise that the power of the State, on its side, may become guilty of opposition to the Lord of lords, to that divine ordinance to which it owes its powers.<sup>28</sup>

This does not mean that the church must approve this state. Certain obligations are still owed, but a rendering to God is also due. Christians cannot assume responsibility for a demonic state but must become its victims through public denunciation of the political leadership. This is done to exhibit support for the proper theoretical function of the state, rather than as an action against political authority. Resistance to an unjust state is, therefore, required of Christians, but it must be composed and honorable. A true enemy of the state would be one who did not call it to repentance.

Unqualified opposition to the state occurs when it

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 138.

demands that a particular philosophy of life be adopted by all its citizens. This is an attempt by the state to become divine. The question is then:

. . . whether it [the state] has any right to demand from them [its citizens] a particular philosophy of life (Weltanschauung), or at least sentiments and reactions dominated by a particular view imposed by the State from without.<sup>29</sup>

If this should happen, the government must be brought back to its proper function. This may involve conflict, but Christians are responsible for the choice and maintenance of political authority and the consequential struggle this responsibility creates.

For us [Christians] the fulfillment of political duty means . . . responsible choice of authority, responsible decision about the validity of laws, responsible care for their maintenance, in a word, political action, which may and must also mean political struggle.<sup>30</sup>

Therefore, the possibility of revolution exists for the Christian since the primary responsibility of prayer includes active participation in the life and struggle of a nation. The question Barth poses is this, ". . . that we may have to 'overthrow with God' those rulers who do not follow the lines laid down by Christ?"<sup>31</sup> In answer to his own question he argues:

. . . the resolute intention of the teaching of the New Testament is brought out still more plainly when it is clear that Christians must not only endure the earthly State but that they must will it, and that they cannot will it as a "Pilate" State, but as a just State; when it

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 143.    <sup>30</sup>Ibid., 144.    <sup>31</sup>Ibid., 145.

is seen that there is no outward escape from the political sphere; when it is seen that Christians, while they remain within the church and are wholly committed to the future "city" are equally committed to responsibility for the earthly "city" called to work and (it may be) to struggle, as well as to pray, for it; in short, when each one of them is responsible for the character of the State as a just State.<sup>32</sup>

To summarize, the responsibilities of church and state are different but unified in Christ. To insure a proper relationship between the two, a mutual guarantee should exist--the state will protect the church and the church will pray for the state. Within this relationship the church must be willing to call those who govern to repentance, and Christians must assume responsibility for governance in the resulting struggle.

#### Robert McAfee Brown: A Just Revolution

According to Brown,<sup>33</sup> a revolution is a response to systemic or structural violence.<sup>34</sup> Revolution, as a remedy for this situation, attempts to replace the prevailing "system" (based on violence) with one that is based on justice. In this endeavor violence itself becomes more prevalent due to a "spiral effect."<sup>35</sup> At the first level violence and injustice permeates entire social, economic, and political

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 145-146.

<sup>33</sup>My source is Robert McAfee Brown, Religion and Violence (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1973)

<sup>34</sup>See above chapter 1, 10-13. <sup>35</sup>See Brown, 8-12.



systems. At the second level the response to this injustice and violence is directed against the status quo. "Those who have been the victims of injustice finally decide that they must throw off the shackles of their oppression and end the massive injustice they have suffered."<sup>36</sup> The third level is increased repression by the status quo. "Confronted with revolt, those who hold power put down the revolt by whatever repressive means are necessary to ensure that their power is not threatened."<sup>37</sup>

Brown argues that there have been three principal responses to violence within Christian ethics: pacifism, the just war, and the crusade. Brown examines the implications for revolutionary violence within each ethic. He rejects the crusade as irresponsible. Indiscriminate killing does not necessarily insure the creation of a just society. Pacifism is not rejected in principle, but such a position does not adequately address the problem of structural violence and injustice. Brown opts for the just war ethic in providing a possible guideline for the initiation and conduct of a modern revolution.

According to Catholic moral theology, there are six criteria which justify the initiation and conduct of war. First, war must be declared by a legitimate authority. In the modern era this usually means a nation-state. Second,

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 10.    <sup>37</sup>Ibid., 11.

war must be carried out with right intention--the eventual goals being peace, justice, and ". . . that the good should be promoted."<sup>38</sup> Third, war is a last resort. All other methods of resolving differences must be exhausted. Fourth, the waging of war must be based on the principle of proportionality. The eventual good must be greater than the evil suffered. Fifth, there must be a reasonable chance of success. Without a possible chance for victory the resulting deaths and damage would be fruitless and immoral. Sixth, war must be waged with moderation. Restraint must be used in choosing targets (e.g., civilians) and the amount of force employed.

Brown argues that these criteria can be applied to constructing an ethic for a "just revolution."<sup>39</sup> For Brown, structural violence is the major object of a modern revolution. Through revolutionary acts the basic structures of violence and injustice can be challenged by its victims. Brown concludes that the just war ethic can be applied to revolutionary situations

. . . to help determine whether there might be cases in which it would conceivably be just to use physical violence as a remedy for the hidden violence present in unjust social structures.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>39</sup>See *ibid.*, 13-21. Cf. Davies, 164-184.

<sup>40</sup>Brown, 21.

Based on his understanding of unjust and violent structures, Brown explains the steps which lead to a just revolution. First, the initial impulse comes from the gospel as an expression of the love of neighbor.<sup>41</sup> The revolutionary must not be self-seeking. Second, the eventual goal is to replace the present system based on violence with one that is established on the principle of love or agape. Third, the ". . . concern for the well-being of the neighbor must be translated into a practical program for change."<sup>42</sup> Christian love must be expressed through political, economic, and social structures. Fourth, peaceful methods of reform must first be employed. Fifth, as an expression of self-defense against structural violence, the oppressive minority should be overthrown in order to ". . . root out the structural violence it [the oppressive minority] was maintaining against the oppressed majority."<sup>43</sup> A thorough condemnation of the status quo is needed, and the right of self-defense by the oppressed against the prevailing system must be advocated.

At this point Brown returns to his initial question: is there a just revolution analogous to a just war? Brown maintains that in certain situations the use of violence to

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<sup>41</sup>Brown does not present any historical evidence that a revolution has been motivated by altruistic rather than self-interested concerns.

<sup>42</sup>Brown, 50. <sup>43</sup>Ibid., 51.

overthrow specific regimes and bring about fundamental change is ethically demanded and necessary.

In simplest terms, the case would be made that structural violence can become so deepseated, so powerfully entrenched, and so destructive and despotic that there remains no way to overthrow it short of physical violence. The need to overthrow it by such means is not only permissible, but is demanded in the name of justice, equality, and love.<sup>44</sup>

From Brown's perspective, there is a major distinction between the violence used for revolution and the violence employed for repression. There is a direct relationship between the ends and means regarding the use of violence. A just revolution, for example, would never advocate indiscriminate killing or torture to achieve its goals.

Brown maintains that the criteria of the just war ethic can also be used to justify the initiation and conduct of violent revolution. First, revolution must be declared by legitimate representatives of the oppressed. Government is not the sole expression of a nation's political will or desire.<sup>45</sup> Second, revolution must be waged with right intention. "The impetus to revolution usually arises out of a profound sense of moral outrage that injustice is being perpetuated on a wide scale."<sup>46</sup> Third, revolution must

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 59.

<sup>45</sup>Brown does not elaborate on who would constitute a "legitimate representative of the oppressed," or what alternative political expressions to the state might be.

<sup>46</sup>Brown, 59.

always be a last resort. All attempts at peaceful change should first be exhausted since nonviolent change is preferable to violence. Fourth, there must be a sense of proportionality. "The good that is gained must far outweigh the evil that will be inflicted in gaining the good."<sup>47</sup> Fifth, there must be a reasonable chance that the revolution will succeed. There should not be a "romantic mystique" concerning violence for a noble cause, nor an initiation of a revolt that is a "lost cause" from the beginning. Sixth, revolution must be conducted with moderation and restraint. Such questions as who or what will be targets and the use of terror should be addressed and assessed.

Brown admits that his criteria are general and that different contexts will demand different approaches. Whether a revolution is just or not depends on the situation and how well the questions raised by the criteria are answered. The criteria used to justify a revolution in Latin America, for example, cannot be easily transferred to a different context. Brown also argues that revolutionaries must attempt to avoid any misuse of violence as a means to achieve fundamental social, political, and economic change. A revolution should never replace one structure of violence with another.

Finally, Brown maintains that violent revolution is one final phase of a spectrum of social change.<sup>48</sup> The initial

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 60. <sup>48</sup>See *ibid.*, 78-85.

phase is a peaceful attempt to reform the system. Such a procedure assumes that change is possible and that the existing structures are essentially good. If this fails then nonviolent challenge is required. This entails an appeal to a social sense of justice as exemplified by the career of Martin Luther King, Jr. The next phase is the establishment of an alternative system. This approach is best illustrated by the development of a "counter-culture." The final phase is violent revolution.

Only after a significant attempt to embody the above positions does one have the moral right to weigh the option of physical violence as the "only way left" to bring about needed change.<sup>49</sup>

To summarize, Brown believes that violence is a systemic problem. Oppression occurs when existing systems use their power unjustly. In reaction to injustice revolution occurs. Revolution must be governed by criteria that are roughly analogous to criteria found in the classical just war ethic. Violent revolution must also be a last resort in the final phase of a spectrum of social change.

#### John Howard Yoder: A Revolutionary Witness

Yoder bases his analysis of revolution<sup>50</sup> on the

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 85.

<sup>50</sup>My sources are John Howard Yoder, The Politics of Jesus (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972) and John H. Yoder, The Original Revolution (Scottsdale: Herald, 1971)

assumption that Christian ethics are by necessity sectarian, but can be used to achieve fundamental economic, social, and political change. The means employed, however, must always be nonviolent. There are three reasons why Yoder rejects any use of violence.

First, the career of Jesus is central to Christian ethics. The life of Jesus, as portrayed in the Gospels, is a normative model that should be emulated by Christians. Believers must either accept or reject different types of behavior (i.e., behavior accepted or rejected by Jesus) that have social, political, and economic consequences. "[T]he ministry and the claims of Jesus are best understood as presenting to men not the avoidance of political options, but one particular social-political-ethical option."<sup>51</sup> Since Jesus rejected violence in pressing this particular ethic so should modern Christians.

Second, Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom prohibits the use of violence. In Jesus' ministry the kingdom broke into and transformed history. Consequently, social, political, and economic relationships will undergo fundamental change. Participants in this "counter-culture" will adopt lifestyles and values that will threaten and eventually replace the existing order. Although Christians will be tempted to employ violence to establish the kingdom, it must be

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<sup>51</sup>Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 23.

rejected as an old tool of a corrupt age--the kingdom requires new means as well as new goals. "[I]t belongs to the nature of the new order that, though it condemns and displaces the old, it does not do so with the arms of the old."<sup>52</sup>

Third, Yoder rejects violent revolution because it is ineffective. Violent revolution is never thorough enough because the use of violence prevents a clear break of the future (based on peaceful relationships) from the past (based on violent relationships). When violence is used to achieve change it is the people in power who are replaced rather than the structures.

What is wrong with the violent revolution . . . is not that it changes too much but that it changes too little; the Zealot is the reflection of the tyrant whom he replaces by means of the tools of the tyrant.<sup>53</sup>

According to Yoder, the proper Christian response to unjust political, social, and economic structures is the creation of a witnessing church. Such a church is a voluntary minority within society. It is a radical community that Yoder describes as an "underground movement," "cell movement," or "intentional community."<sup>54</sup> Although a witnessing church does not participate within the mainstream of society, it nonetheless presents a challenge or alternative to its structures and values.

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>53</sup>Yoder, The Original Revolution, 23. <sup>54</sup>Ibid., 28.



The distinctness is not cultic or ritual separation, but rather a nonconformed quality of ("secular") involvement in the life of the world. It thereby constitutes an unavoidable challenge to the powers that be and the beginning of a new set of social alternatives.<sup>55</sup>

There are four principal characteristics of a witnessing church that have a direct bearing on its moral conduct:

- 1.) The career and teachings of Jesus are central;
- 2.) The church always exists in tension with political authority;
- 3.) The violence of the state must be met with nonviolent resistance and revolutionary subordination; and
- 4.) The church must retain a faithful eschatology.

Such a witnessing church offers a revolutionary alternative to both the status quo and those who would oppose it through violent means.

1.) Yoder rejects current "mainstream ethics" because they dismiss Jesus' teachings as being either ahistorical or irrelevant for contemporary concerns.<sup>56</sup> Yoder argues that Jesus' ministry has a direct, relevant, and normative effect on contemporary Christian ethics.

Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom provided a base for his messianic ethic. Throughout his career Jesus encouraged his followers to adopt alternative lifestyles that would be a witness to a new reality opposed to existing social, economic, and political structures. Through this messianic ethic (the appearance of a new kingdom) Jesus resisted the temptations of accommodation (Sadducees), pious purity

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<sup>55</sup>Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 47. <sup>56</sup>See *ibid.*, 11-25.

(Pharisees), and revolutionary enthusiasm.<sup>57</sup>

This messianic ethic is to be appropriated and emulated by the church through its life based on "Jubilee principles." Yoder believes that Jesus' understanding of the kingdom was based on the Old Testament idea of the Jubilee. Within the Christian community there should be a remission of debts, a liberation of slaves, and a redistribution of wealth.<sup>58</sup> A discipleship based on Jubilee principles means that Christians participate in and demonstrate the love, life, and death of Jesus. It should be stressed, however, that unlike Thielicke, Barth, or Brown, Yoder does not claim that Christian ethics are normative for society. It is not the responsibility of the state to actualize the political, social, and economic implications of the messianic ethic. Rather, it is the church's responsibility to bear witness to this unique reality. This leads to a tension regarding the state's power and authority.

2.) Yoder maintains that traditional Christian ethics have viewed Romans 13 as the normative understanding of the state. For a variety of reasons<sup>59</sup> he believes that this is unfortunate. For the purpose of this project, however, only two of Yoder's arguments will be examined.

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<sup>57</sup>See *ibid.*, 62-63. <sup>58</sup>See *ibid.*, 66-67.

<sup>59</sup>Yoder argues that there are six reasons. See *ibid.*, 195-213.

First, Romans 13 does not reflect the major thrust of the New Testament's teaching about the state. Paul articulated a positive view of the state within a specific context. The situation of the Roman Church was not synonymous with other contexts, and Paul's teaching, therefore, does not have a universal significance. In other parts of the New Testament the state is a demonic rather than a divine institution.<sup>60</sup>

Second, Yoder argues that Paul was not implying that the state is a creation of God but that God orders creation through political institutions. The state does not play a role in the salvation of creation but represents a desperate response to the sinful condition of humanity. The authority of and obedience to the state is, therefore, limited.<sup>61</sup> Christians do not need to formulate a theory of the state, nor do they have an obligation to engage in secular governance. Their ultimate loyalty bears witness to the alternative reality of the kingdom. The church does not emulate or imitate the practices and values of the "powers that be."

3.) When the church faces an unjust state its response should be nonviolent resistance. An appropriate example is the pacific Anabaptists during the Reformation. According to Yoder, such a response does not reflect an ethical quietism but a revolutionary subordination vis-a-vis an unjust state.

Subordination means that a given order is "accepted,"

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<sup>60</sup>See *ibid.*, 195. <sup>61</sup>See *ibid.*, 203.

but its meaning rests in relationship to God rather than any alternative criteria.<sup>62</sup> This acceptance of subordination creates the position of Christian moral agency.

The Subordinate person in the social order is addressed as a moral agent. He is called upon to take responsibility for the acceptance of his position in society as meaningful before God.<sup>63</sup>

By accepting this responsibility of subordination, the Christian participates in a community of faith that nurtures an alternative vision of political, social, and economic relationships. In this way the authority of the state (and its related institutions) is not accepted, but neither is it directly challenged.<sup>64</sup>

The acceptance of this subordinate position frees the church to engage in a radical ministry of servanthood--a servanthood that is directed toward the world. It is the power of this ministry that will call people to reject the coercive state, and the revolutionary violence against it, in favor of the kingdom that will ultimately transform the existing order.<sup>65</sup> Such subordination is in the long run revolutionary because prevailing values are rejected for those inspired by an alternative vision of the future. Christians live in (and are loyal to) the "not yet" of the kingdom rather than the

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<sup>62</sup>See *ibid.*, 175. <sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>64</sup>Through direct violent confrontation.

<sup>65</sup>See Yoder, The Politics of Jesus, 190-192.

"now" of the state. The state is the precursor of the kingdom and is, therefore, sectarian in structure (revolutionary), allowing it to be a servant for the world (subordinate).

4.) If the church is to maintain its position of revolutionary subordination, it must also retain a faithful eschatology. Yoder argues that eschatology is the primary anxiety of the modern age. There is an overriding concern that "history comes out right." Such anxiety can be seen in efforts that emphasize a particular perspective (ideology) which will give meaning and purpose. The problem with such an approach, however, is that it assumes there is a direct relationship between moral cause and effect that, if properly understood, can provide adequate societal goals and motivations.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, a predominate value produces a goal that becomes the primary concern, reducing all other values to secondary importance. Any means, therefore, are justified by the end.

One seeks to lift up one focal point in the midst of the course of human relations, one thread of meaning and causality which is more important than individual persons, their lives and well-being, because it in itself determines wherein their well-being consists. Therefore it is justified to sacrifice to this one "cause" other subordinate values, including the life and welfare of one's self, one's neighbor, and (of course!) of the enemy.<sup>67</sup>

For Yoder, the principal feature of Christian eschatology is its demand for faithfulness and patience on the part of the church rather than effectiveness. It is a call

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<sup>66</sup>See *ibid.*, 235. <sup>67</sup>*Ibid.* 234.

to obedient discipleship rather than a goal to be achieved through historical effort. It is not the responsibility of Christians to make sure that history "comes out right" (e.g., through efficient governance or violent revolution), but to faithfully fulfill the demands Jesus makes of a witnessing and serving church. There must be a radical rejection of the methods that are used to govern the affairs of the world. The principal imagery for the church is the cross rather than the sword. As Yoder emphasizes, it is

. . . the cross and not the sword, suffering and not brute power [that] determines the meaning of history. The key to the obedience of God's people is not their effectiveness but their patience.<sup>68</sup>

This emphasis upon the cross demands an ethical stance that has no historical certainty. Faith is central because the ethical demands which are placed upon the church are not determined by historical circumstances or their outcome. Like Jesus, the church both rejects and is rejected by conventional wisdom.

To summarize, when the other characteristics of the church are combined with a faithful eschatology, Yoder offers a nonviolent but radically revolutionary ethic. Jesus is the paradigm of all ethical thought and action for the church. Jesus rejected both the state and its violent alternatives due to their dependence on coercion to achieve their goals.

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 238.

Because of this rejection, the church will always be in tension with the demands of the state. This tension produces a position of revolutionary subordination for the Christian. The church simultaneously supports and transforms the state through its radical servanthood. Since the church's eschatological mission is one of faithfulness rather than effectiveness, the church is a precursor of the kingdom. It is a radically revolutionary community because it represents a comprehensive alternative to the values and methods of present practices. This alternative will eventually transform social, political, and economic structures. The efforts of the church in this regard represent a new creation that is discontinuous with the old. For Yoder, there can be no revolutionary change unless the methods used to achieve it are consonant with the goal. For the church, this requires a faithful and nonviolent obedience to the teachings and actions of Jesus.

Several contrasts and comparisons can now be offered on the assumptions these theologians make about God, sin, salvation, ecclesiology, and eschatology. The purpose of this comparison is: 1.) to illustrate the relationship between theological assumptions and ethical reflection vis-a-vis revolution; and 2.) to establish a point of departure for contrasting the works of Thielicke, Barth, Brown, and Yoder with liberation theologians in terms of methodology,

theological assumptions, and ethical judgments.

Thielicke begins with the assumption that political order is a normative condition. Since the state is a divine gift for the purpose of preserving order, God is associated with the creation and maintenance of an orderly world. In addition, it is the role of the state to preserve this divine order within history since God assumes little, if any, direct involvement. The dominant image of God is that of a transcendent creator. Because of this understanding of order, the primary result of sin is anarchy. Although orderly government can help to alleviate this condition of sin, ultimately salvation is experienced in an individual and nonhistorical manner. In revolutionary situations the role of the church is confined to a spiritual and pastoral function that does not "take sides" in the conflict but prays for the restoration of order. Thielicke's eschatology is vague<sup>69</sup> but implies that, like salvation, it is individual and nonhistorical. He certainly offers no historical vision of the future which the church is attempting to actualize. Thielicke's ethical stance toward revolution, therefore, is that it is a decision for the individual Christian. Any institutional involvement on the part of the church is prohibited. This is in keeping with his assumption that although sin has historical

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<sup>69</sup>This topic is examined briefly in Thielicke, II, 609-611.



consequences (e.g., anarchy), salvation and eschatology find their fulfillment in a transcendent and nonhistorical God.

Although Barth shares many of Thielicke's assumptions, there are some significant differences. Barth agrees that political order is a normative condition implying a transcendent creator, but the primary result of sin is anarchy and injustice. The dominant image of God, then, is not only that of a creator but also of a judge who attempts to rectify the injustice of creation. The principal sign of salvation is justice. This connotes a social emphasis. Therefore, in a revolutionary situation the church should suffer the consequences of an unjust state and assume its responsibility to reestablish justice. Barth's eschatology in this regard is clear--the kingdom represents a Christian hope that is also a political reality. The just state is a precursor of the kingdom that will someday be complete and sovereign within history. Barth's ethical position toward revolution, therefore, is that the church is obligated to call an unjust state to repentance and participate in the ensuing struggle. This is consistent with his assumption that although God is transcendent, divine judgment can only be experienced through a historically relevant salvation and eschatology.

Brown begins at a different point by arguing that revolution may represent a legitimate response to repression. An orderly state is not necessarily normative. Brown insists that the principal result of sin is not so much anarchy or

injustice as it is systemic or structural violence. The only method to achieve salvation in this situation is to replace systemic violence with structures that are just. This implies that God actively participates in the historical struggle to rectify structural violence. Unlike Thielicke or Barth, the dominant image of God is not a transcendent creator or judge but an incarnate pursuer of justice. Brown's position on the church in this pursuit of justice is vague. Although Brown insists that Christian faith provides a motivation for participation in revolutionary struggle, he is not clear if this is the prerogative of individual Christians or the church as an institution. Within this revolutionary struggle, however, eschatology is a historical reality that is present and is being actualized through the establishment of justice. In this regard it is linked with his understanding of salvation and has an obvious social emphasis. Brown's ethical stance toward revolution, therefore, is a just revolution code that is motivated by a love for the neighbor. This is in keeping with his assumption that God is an incarnate participant in the struggle for justice--a struggle experienced in a historically active eschatology and process of salvation.

Yoder insists that neither the state nor revolutionary struggle provides an adequate starting point for Christian ethics. For the Christian, Jesus is the paradigm for recognizing God's love and care for creation. Like Brown, the dominant image of God is an incarnate participant, but this

participation is seen in the ministry of Jesus. It is not so much a question of order or even justice as it is a question of faithfulness. This can be seen in Yoder's assumptions about sin and salvation. Yoder agrees that anarchy, injustice, and structural violence are indications of sin. But, the cause does not lie in rebellion or an improperly governed state. All institutions are sinful and corrupt because of their association with a fallen world. Salvation is not achieved by reforming or replacing institutions, but by withdrawing from them into a community guided by the values of the kingdom. The role of the church, then, is a sectarian or witnessing community that engages in a radical servanthood. The church is literally a counterculture that does not participate in secular governance or revolutionary confrontation. For Yoder, the resulting eschatology is paradoxically both transhistorical and historical. It is transhistorical in that the Christian is not concerned with making history turn out right. Rather, the church's eschatology is a call to remain faithful to the teachings and demands of Jesus. Such an understanding of eschatology (and salvation), however, has historical consequences because such faithfulness will result in suffering.<sup>70</sup> Yoder's ethical position toward revolution, therefore, is a nonviolent subordination that both serves

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<sup>70</sup>In the future the kingdom will also transform all historical institutions, but this is not the present responsibility of the church or the Christian.

and rejects the status quo. This is consistent with his assumption that since Jesus presents the model of faith, a faithful response would be a withdrawal from the world in order to find salvation.

A final comparison must now be offered on the authority, scope, and locus of the theological assumptions and ethical judgments advocated by these theologians.

By "authority" I mean the ultimate source or reference point that the theological assumptions and ethical judgments attempt to exemplify and actualize. The theologians we examined represent either a transcendent or an incarnate source of authority. For example, a transcendent source of authority stresses the role political governance plays in a cosmic process of salvation--i.e., political, economic, and social structures are divine "gifts" rather than functional historical processes. An incarnate source of authority emphasizes the historical nature and consequences of a salvific process--i.e., the source of moral authority lies within, rather than outside, the confines of history. From this perspective, Thieliicke and Barth represent a transcendent emphasis (due to their stress upon orderly governance of creation), whereas Brown and Yoder represent an incarnate source of authority (due to their stress upon justice and Jesus respectively).

"Scope" refers to the intended audience of an ethic and its historical applicability. The scope can be either

universal or sectarian. A universal scope means an ethic is intended for all people and is applicable in any historical setting. A sectarian scope confines an ethic to a particular community and distinct historical period. From this viewpoint, Thieliicke, Barth, and Brown have a universal scope. Yoder's scope is sectarian.

"Locus" designates the primary mode in which the ethical action is advocated. The three possibilities are individual, social, and communal. Thieliicke's locus is the individual. A person must choose to either uphold order, resist it, or engage in social reform. For Barth and Brown the locus is social. Political governance and revolutionary challenge have relational qualities that cannot be understood or responded to through autonomous decisions. Ethical actions and their consequences are social in nature and impact. Finally, Yoder's locus is communal. It is within a community of faith that ethical reflection takes place. Although there are individual and social dimensions of ethical reflection and action, attention is always directed back to the community.

These comparisons illustrate the relationship between theological assumptions and ethical judgments. What one believes about God, sin, salvation, ecclesiology, and eschatology has a direct effect upon one's response to revolution. Furthermore, these comparisons (which are schematized in Diagram 3.1) provide a point of departure for a critique by

Diagram 3.1  
COMPARISON OF THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ETHICAL JUDGMENTS

	<u>Thielicke</u>	<u>Barth</u>	<u>Brown</u>	<u>Yoder</u>
Dominant Image of God:	Transcendent Creator	Transcendent Creator & Judge	Incarnate Pursuer of Justice	Incarnate Participant (Jesus)
Principal Result of Sin:	Anarchy	Anarchy & Injustice	Systemic or Structural Violence	Fallen World
Principal Sign of Salvation:	Nonhistorical/Individual	Justice/Social	Justice/Social	Withdrawal/Communal
Ecclesial Role in Revolution:	Spiritual/Pastoral	Suffering/Responsibility	Vague: Institutional or individual?	Sectarian/Witnessing
Eschatology:	Individual/Nonhistorical	Political Reality/State as Precursor of Kingdom	Historical/Present	Transhistorical/Historical
Ethical Stance Toward Revolution:	Individual Decision/No Institutional Involvement	Call to Repentance/Struggle	Just Revolution Code based on Love of Neighbor	Nonviolent Revolutionary Subordination
Authority, Scope, Locus of Ethic:	Transcendent/Universal/Individual	Transcendent/Universal/Social	Incarnate/Universal/Social	Incarnate/Sectarian/Communal

liberation theology. This critique will not only challenge the validity of the theological assumptions and their consequential ethical judgments, but will also call into question the methodology that produced them.

#### THE CRITIQUE OF WESTERN PERSPECTIVES BY LIBERATION THEOLOGY

In the previous section we examined four selected western theologian's views on revolution, the theological assumptions behind their views, and the authority, scope, and locus of their ethical positions. The purpose of this section is: 1.) to examine the methodology employed by these western theologians and compare it with an alternative methodology used by liberation theologians; 2.) to explore the ethical judgments on violent revolution implied by liberation theologians; and 3.) to compare and contrast the theological assumptions of the selected western theologians with those of liberation theology.

This critique by liberation theology will be based on the works of Hugo Assmann, Jose Miguez Bonino, Gustavo Gutierrez, and Juan Luis Segundo. Unlike the previous section, however, the positions of these theologians will not be presented separately. The critique will instead be accomplished by examining the methodology, ethical implications, and theological reflections suggested by the works of these liberation theologians.

## Methodology

The ethical analysis and judgments of the selected western theologians previously examined represent the culmination of a methodological process. As mentioned in chapter one,<sup>71</sup> western theological methodology tends to maintain a dichotomy between spiritual and historical concerns, insist that thought precede action, prefer universal statements over contextual ones, and assume that order is in some form a normative condition. From these methodological predispositions basic theological assumptions about God, sin, salvation, ecclesiology, and eschatology are formulated. These assumptions conform to and represent the predispositions even though a wide variety of assumptions are formulated.

Based on these theological assumptions, parameters for ethical sources of authority, scope, and locus are established. These parameters provide guidelines for ethical analysis and judgment. In this sense, they function as a paradigmatic device for moral reflection and action. It is important to note that for western methodology these parameters are dependent upon the theological assumptions and not vice versa. Only at the end of this methodological process can concrete ethical judgments on revolution be offered.

The methodology of liberation theology shares many

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<sup>71</sup>See above, 20-24.



common features with its western counterpart but in a different order. The predispositions of liberation theology<sup>72</sup> include an orientation toward history, an insistence that action precedes thought, a preference for contextual statements over universal ones, and the belief that "order" is not necessarily a normative condition. These predispositions establish parameters for ethical authority, scope, and locus. From these parameters moral judgments are made within historical situations that demand concrete action. It is only after moral action has been initiated that theological reflection occurs.

The order of this process exhibits a marked contrast with western methodology. Western methodology gradually moves from abstract thought to concrete action. The predispositions represent ideas, prejudices, and preferences. From these predispositions theological assumptions are constructed which, although having practical implications, are nonetheless theoretical. Parameters are built on these assumptions that set limits on ethical analysis and judgment. It is after these judgments are made that concrete application is implemented.

Liberation methodology, however, moves from the abstract to the concrete to the abstract. Again, the predispositions represent ideas, prejudices, and preferences.

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<sup>72</sup>See above, 24-28.

However, instead of providing a basis for constructing theological assumptions, parameters are established. These parameters function as a paradigmatic device for understanding and responding to concrete situations, and are, therefore, influenced by both the predispositions (abstract) and the context of the situation (concrete). There is a dialectical relationship between moral praxis and the more abstract notions of its authority, scope, and locus. After moral action has been initiated, the theological assumptions implied or in operation are critically examined. It is literally a theology in the making. The difference with western methodology is that the theological assumptions are based on concrete action rather than abstract or theoretical constructs. The movement from abstract to concrete to abstract is consistent with Assmann's notion that theology is "reflecting critically" on human experience,<sup>73</sup> or as Bonino argues:

The main point here is that history is not primarily the unfolding of man's consciousness or of his ideas but the dynamics of his concrete activity, the main form of which is the work through which he transforms nature in order to respond to the totality of his needs.<sup>74</sup>

As we will see later, these contrasting methodological processes (see Diagram 3.2) result in dissimilar theological assumptions and ethical judgments regarding violent revolution.

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<sup>73</sup>See Assmann, 62.

<sup>74</sup>Bonino, Christians and Marxists, 92.

Diagram 3.2

## COMPARISON OF WESTERN AND LIBERATION METHODOLOGIES

Western Methodology

Predispositions-->Assumptions-->Parameters-->Ethical Judgments  
 [Abstract] [Concrete]

Liberation Methodology

Predispositions-->Parameters<-->Praxis<-->Assumptions  
 [Abstract] [Concrete] [Abstract]

Since the parameters of liberation methodology play a major role in the development of ethical judgments and theological assumptions, we must briefly examine their content before continuing. The authority, scope, and locus of liberation methodology are historical, contextual, and structural, respectively.

Ethical authority resides in history. Moral conduct is judged by its historical efficacy. History is simultaneously the mode in which praxis takes place and the object of theological reflection. History, therefore, is the principal source of authority because it is here that transcendent realities are revealed,<sup>75</sup> and where humanity experiences its

<sup>75</sup>See Juan Luis Segundo, The Community Called Church (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973) 3-23.

being through concrete decisions and action.<sup>76</sup> Or as Bonino argues,

. . . there is no truth outside or beyond the concrete historical events in which men are involved as agents. There is, therefore, no knowledge except in action itself, in the process of transforming the world through participation in history.<sup>77</sup>

This knowledge based on action culminates in a "salvation of history" rather than a "salvation history."<sup>78</sup>

The scope of ethical reflection and action is specific historical contexts. It is not history per se where moral action occurs, but within specific situations and locations. For liberation theologians, therefore, the context which must be addressed is the plight of the poor and oppressed in Latin America, and their struggle to achieve liberation. The key to understanding history, and consequently the key to moral conduct, is the contemporary struggle of the oppressed to secure their freedom from unjust social, economic, and political structures.

The locus of moral action and theological reflection is structural. Political, social, and economic structures must be changed if history is to "be saved." Consequently, moral action is not directed toward individuals, specific

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<sup>76</sup>See Gutierrez, Liberation and Change, 84.

<sup>77</sup>Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 88.

<sup>78</sup>See Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 3-19.

communities, or vague social ideals but toward structures that either humanize or dehumanize.

Since these parameters play a direct and decisive role in formulating a liberation understanding of and response to violent revolution, we are now ready to examine an ethical judgment based on a historical source of authority, contextual scope, and structural locus.

### The Ethical Judgment of Liberation Theology: Revolutionary Love

A liberation understanding of and response to violent revolution represents a fourfold process: 1.) Reflection and action begins with a specific historical situation; 2.) The Christian response to this situation is historical and political praxis; 3.) This response transforms the situation; and 4.) Revolutionary means are employed to bring about this transformation.

1.) Beginning with the situation. Within liberation theology ethical reflection and action begins with specific historical situations. History is where the demands of faith are exhibited, acted upon, and interpreted. The world sets the agenda for the Christian. "An engaged faith and obedience cannot stand outside or above the world in which they are engaged."<sup>79</sup> The historical context for liberation theologians

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<sup>79</sup> Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 21.

is Latin America--a situation characterized by a history of exploitation, oppression, and alienation.

The current social, political, and economic conditions of Latin America stem from a history of exploitation.<sup>80</sup> The "discovery" of the "new world" opened Latin America to European colonization. Its natural resources were readily exploitable, and the indigenous population provided a cheap (if not slave) source of labor. In addition, though the colonizers felt the inhabitants would benefit from bringing them the "true religion," Christianity functioned as a means of social, political, and economic control that favored the Europeans.<sup>81</sup>

Liberation theologians maintain that for a truly Christian interpretation of history, history must be reinterpreted from the perspective of the exploited rather than the exploiters. Christ should be seen in the suffering of the oppressed rather than the church and its colonial conspirators. This reinterpretation will provide the means to change course and build a new history.<sup>82</sup>

Latin America's history of exploitation led to oppression and alienation. Although Latin American nations gained

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<sup>80</sup>See Eduardo Galeano, Open Veins of Latin America (New York: Monthly Review, 1973)

<sup>81</sup>See Gutierrez, Liberation and Change, 65.

<sup>82</sup>See Assmann, 36.

political autonomy through wars of independence, these wars did not result in political, social, and economic freedom for its citizens. Colonialism was replaced with neocolonialism. Particularly with the rise of the bourgeois class in Europe and North America, the Latin American nations were "born dependent."<sup>83</sup> As Gutierrez explains:

The beginning industrial revolution reinforced the European bourgeois class, and little by little this development asserted bourgeois domination in the international field. . . . In this setting, the so-called "Neocolonial pact" was constituted: the New World countries furnished raw materials and the industrial countries sold them manufactured goods.<sup>84</sup>

Not only was this neocolonial dependence confined to economics and politics, but it included religion and culture as well.<sup>85</sup>

This legacy of neocolonial dependence sets the stage for Latin America's current oppression and alienation. The oppression can be vividly seen in unjust social, political, and economic structures that deprive people of freedom and a worthwhile existence. For example:

Two-thirds, if not more, of the Latin American population are physically undernourished to the point of starvation in some regions. [Coca-chewing, alcohol, even mud-eating in some areas are attempts at compensation.]

Three-fourths of the population in several of the Latin American countries are illiterate; in others from 20 to 60 percent. [In relatively advanced countries like Argentina, illiteracy and school desertion have increased in the last ten years; Cuba has practically eliminated illiteracy and Chile was on the way to doing so.]

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<sup>83</sup>Gutierrez, Liberation and Change, 70.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid. <sup>85</sup>See *ibid.*, 69.

An overwhelming majority of the Latin American agricultural population is landless. Two-thirds, if not more, of the agricultural, forest, and livestock resources of Latin America are owned or controlled by a handful of native landlords and foreign corporations.<sup>86</sup>

This oppression, in turn, leads to alienation. As Bonino argues:

In the final analysis, the capitalist form of production as it functions in today's world creates in the dependent countries (perhaps not only in them) a form of human existence characterized by artificiality, selfishness, the inhuman and dehumanizing pursuit of success measured in terms of prestige and money, and the resignation of responsibility for the world and for one's neighbor.<sup>87</sup>

Religious principles and practices reinforce this alienation by emphasizing dependence and the inability to determine one's own fate--i.e., dependence receives a religious endorsement and sacred quality.<sup>88</sup> Western religious and cultural ideas become a virtual norm, severely restricting the options available for change or improvement.

It [western thought] has made crystal clear that, insofar as it borrowed its categories from the bourgeois society and interpreted all phenomena in the Third World in those categories, it was actually taking that society for granted as a norm and, to that extent, denying history and confining change to modifications within the system.<sup>89</sup>

Ultimately the victims of oppression and alienation are unable to participate in the construction of their own history, solidifying the powerful hold of the status quo.

According to liberation theology, the Christian must

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<sup>86</sup>Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 22-23.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 31. <sup>88</sup>See *ibid.*, 34. <sup>89</sup>Ibid.



attempt to desacralize these oppressive religious/political structures. They must challenge the structures with open criticism and actively work to replace them with structures based on justice. It is through this desacralizing process that the alienated are not only freed, but find opportunity to create and participate in their own history. Or as Bonino clarifies:

. . . how do we do justice effectively in the world? The hungry, thirsty, naked, foreigners and prisoners of the world are always historical beings caught in the web of human economic, political, and social relationships. Our obligation to them cannot escape the complexity of such relationships. In other words, Christian ethics has to deal with the problem of historical mediation.<sup>90</sup>

In short, the Christian must reject and challenge the status quo and its consequential oppression, alienation, and sacralization. The question then becomes: what concrete action must the Christian take?

2.) The Christian response to the situation. The Christian response to the historical situation of oppression and alienation is one that "politicizes" understanding and action. This stress on politics does not parallel religious faith but is its expression in concrete terms--i.e., faith and theology "always have a political content."<sup>91</sup> Such an effort helps to de-privatize faith in order to make it

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<sup>90</sup>Bonino, Christians and Marxists, 113.

<sup>91</sup>Assmann, 58. Cf. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 265-278.

relevant for larger social and political relationships. This is particularly important in Latin America because of the structural nature of oppression and alienation, and the prolonged challenge needed to correct it.<sup>92</sup> The only Christian response to the situation is a political and historical praxis motivated by a love for the neighbor (agape) and exemplified in the church's solidarity with the poor.

Political and historical praxis insists that theory and practice represent a singular, rather than separate, process. The traditional dichotomy between them is artificial and results in a historically irrelevant theology and ethic. Theory and practice represents a spectrum of differences in which thoughts and deeds must be consistent. "Speaking the truth is no longer an acceptable substitute for doing the truth."<sup>93</sup> As Assmann insists:

Reflection ceases to have a world of its own and becomes simply a critical function of action; its world and its truth are experience itself, and there is no more flight to a verbal world decked with ontological considerations that reflect man's inability to deal with the real problems. Interpretation and the language in which it is expressed become the humanizing dimension of the act of transforming the world.<sup>94</sup>

According to Assmann, the theological and ethical importance of praxis is illustrated by a series of relationships. First, there must be a direct relationship between

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<sup>92</sup>See Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 40.

<sup>93</sup>Assmann, 74. <sup>94</sup>Ibid.

"practice and truth."<sup>95</sup> Truth is not an abstract idea--e.g., "the ideal truth," or "truth in itself"--but is known only through historical action. Its verification is achieved by its practice in specific situations. Second, praxis involves a relationship between "efficacy and gratuitousness."<sup>96</sup> Gratuitous love, like truth, is not an abstraction but is known exclusively in concrete relationships. Since love is directed toward people (not abstract ideas), its expression must be historically effective--i.e., love enhances the humanity of the neighbor. An effective display of love involves political struggle, as one attempts to liberate one's neighbor from structures that oppress and alienate. Third, since truth and love are historical, the response to the situation in Latin America is nothing more than "faith in practice."<sup>97</sup> Faith is not confined to narrow "religious" concerns but is active in all historical endeavors. It is in these realms that truth and love are known. Faith, if it is to be effective, is more concerned about orthopraxis than orthodoxy and leads to what Gutierrez insists is a "political hermeneutics of the gospel."<sup>98</sup>

This stress on praxis contrasts sharply with western

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<sup>95</sup>See *ibid.*, 76-77. <sup>96</sup>See *ibid.*, 77-80.

<sup>97</sup>See *ibid.*, 80-84.

<sup>98</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 13.

or traditional theology. As Bonino points out:

The classical approach, which is deeply embedded in the theological tradition, conceives truth as the correspondence between certain conceptual formulations and universal ideas or principles. The realm of action corresponds, therefore, to a second level: that of the "consequences" or "inferences" of these truths.<sup>99</sup>

Consequently, both western and liberation theology have a latent ideological component that legitimizes their method and conclusions--i.e., western theology is bound to a liberal bourgeois ideology, whereas liberation theology shares many features with more radical perspectives. What is important here is not that theology is linked with ideology, but what the content and practical effects a specific linkage has for a historically efficacious faith. The latent ideological features that should be reinforced are those that support liberation rather than oppression.<sup>100</sup> This leads to what Bonino calls a "revolutionary praxis."<sup>101</sup>

As already alluded to, a political and historical praxis is motivated by agape. The expression of agape, however, is not merely sentimental feelings. It is instead a

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<sup>99</sup>Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 30.

<sup>100</sup>For many liberation theologians Marxism is a more acceptable ideology because of its analysis of class struggle and program for social change. For a discussion regarding the relationship between liberation theology and Marxism, see Bonino, Christians and Marxists, and Jose Miranda, Marx Against the Marxists (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1980)

<sup>101</sup>Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 99-100.

". . . conscious and intelligent effort to change the basic economic and social structures."<sup>102</sup>

Because of oppressive political, economic, and social structures, the expression of agape will entail class conflict and struggle. If love is to be historically effective, it must strive to eradicate the division between oppressed and oppressor. In this sense, the Christian loves both the oppressed and the oppressor, however the consequences of this love are different and do not eliminate the need for class struggle and conflict. As love liberates people from oppressive structures it simultaneously liberates the oppressors "from themselves." As Gutierrez states:

In the context of class struggle today, to love one's enemies presupposes recognizing and accepting that one has class enemies and that it is necessary to combat them. It is not a question of having no enemies, but rather of not excluding them from our love. But love does not mean that the oppressors are no longer enemies, nor does it eliminate the radicalness of the combat against them. "Love of enemies" does not ease tensions; rather it challenges the whole system and becomes a subversive formula.<sup>103</sup>

Class struggle, therefore, becomes a principal sign of salvation.<sup>104</sup> As political, social, and economic liberation is achieved, the love of God is discovered simultaneously (though not differently) as the love of neighbor is exhibited.

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<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>103</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 276.

<sup>104</sup>See *ibid.*, 203.

Although the love of neighbor is a universal love (i.e., both the oppressor and oppressed are loved), its historical expression is not neutral. The expression of love within class struggle requires solidarity with the poor in their struggle to obtain justice. "The class struggle is a fact and neutrality in this question is not possible."<sup>105</sup> A historical and political praxis motivated by a love of neighbor must "take sides" in the effort to overcome oppression. Faith cannot be nonpolitical or even nonpartisan if it is to be efficacious. This leads us to the question of what constitutes an effective historical faith and praxis.

3.) Transforming the situation. The efficacy of faith and praxis is judged by history. Agape is exhibited through class struggle which replaces oppressive structures with ones that are just. Solidarity with the poor helps the church transform social, political, and economic structures,<sup>106</sup> representing a "creative activity"<sup>107</sup> in which the oppressed are liberated to establish their own history. This process of structural transformation is, therefore, central to Christian theology and ethics. "The central preoccupation of the theologian who has accepted the provisional nature of his 'making theology' will no longer be the interpretation of the world, but its transformation."<sup>108</sup> The efficacy of praxis is seen in

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 275. <sup>106</sup>See *ibid.*, 108-114.

<sup>107</sup>See Segundo, 106. <sup>108</sup>Assmann, 122.

a three-phase effort to build a transformed church, society, and people.

First, if the church is to be transformed it must break its bonds with the status quo. "[T]he Church is in one way or another linked to those who wield economic and political power in today's world."<sup>109</sup> The church's bondage to the status quo is best exemplified when insisting it confine its own activities to "spiritual" or "religious" concerns and refrain from "political" involvement. Such restrictions legitimizes oppression since silence implies support. However, a tacit political involvement exists on the part of the church, for in remaining spiritual and uninvolved the church supports the control of the status quo. Neutrality is impossible. The issue is how and in whose interest the church will exhibit its support.

The church breaks its bonds with oppression through solidarity with the poor. This solidarity expresses itself in actions that help to radically alter social, political, and economic structures. Through these efforts the church affirms its universal and particular mission in the world. Its universal mission directs its salvation not just toward those "within" its boundaries, but to all people. The means of this salvation, however, comes through a particular people--the poor and oppressed. Only when the poor are liberated can the

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<sup>109</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 65.

church's universal mission of salvation succeed.

Since the mission of the church is directly linked with the liberation of the poor, it must be transformed from an institution concerned with internal issues to a community that exists for others.<sup>110</sup> Such a self-giving community is a salvific sign and is in dialogue with the world's needs and struggles. The historical efficacy of this salvific sign is seen in the church's direct participation in the struggle for liberation. A transformed church is a community of the poor.

Second, since a transformed church is a community that exists for others, the church must work to build a new society. Indeed, its own transformation is dependent upon these efforts. The motivation for social transformation is again agape.

Hence in the Christian moral outlook, where our concern is directed toward others, special attention is focused on one of man's major needs: the questions which are formulated sooner or later by love.<sup>111</sup>

Consequently, the transformation of society is a distinctly Christian moral problem which calls for action, not in its own institutional interests but in the "interests of our neighbor."<sup>112</sup>

The church initiates its moral program with a denunciation of the status quo. It breaks its bonds with oppression

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<sup>110</sup>See *ibid.*, 260-261. <sup>111</sup>Segundo, 111.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, 110.



by proclaiming (in word and deed) a new reality that shall govern social, economic, and political relationships. "This denunciation is a manner of expressing the intention of becoming disassociated from the existing unjust order."<sup>113</sup> This denunciation is also an indication that the church enters into conflict with the status quo.

The denunciation of injustice implies the rejection of the use of Christianity to legitimize the established order. It likewise implies, in fact, that the Church has entered into conflict with those who wield power.<sup>114</sup>

As the church sides with the poor in its struggle to overcome oppression, it reveals the possibility for grace to subdue the sin that permeates the world's structures.<sup>115</sup> As opposed to social and political forces that stress and reinforce fragmentation, individualism, and autonomy, the vision of a new society offers alternative images that emphasize a greater "humanization." For example, a transformed society will stress global interdependence in which people share mutual responsibilities for one another.<sup>116</sup> Social solidarity and "brotherhood" will be emphasized over divisive and individualistic claims.<sup>117</sup> Moral and spiritual autonomy will give

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<sup>113</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 115.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>See Juan Luis Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1973) 37-39.

<sup>116</sup>See Segundo, The Community Called Church, 101.

<sup>117</sup>See *ibid.*, 102.

way to cultural cohesiveness.<sup>118</sup>

If what is envisioned for a transformed society is to be historically actualized, then the efforts of the church are inseparable from the structural realities it faces. Faith and theology have no import for ethics unless they are grounded in the acceptance of these historical facts, then joined with a fervent and loving desire to change society. For Christians this will require a radical posture that attempts to fundamentally alter and redefine the relationship between exploitive and exploited nations and peoples. As Gutierrez summarizes, this radical posture can be seen in the revolutionary condition of the Third World.

The revolutionary situation which prevails today, especially in the Third World, is an expression of this growing radicalization. To support the social revolution means to abolish the present status quo and to attempt to replace it with a qualitatively different one; it means to build a just society based on new relationships of production; it means to attempt to put an end to the domination of some countries by others, of some social classes by others, of some people by others.<sup>119</sup>

In short, the church transforms the political, social, and economic structures in order to create a liberated society.

The final phase is the transformation of people. Again the universal and contextual scope of Christian faith is significant. The salvific action of Christ includes all

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<sup>118</sup>See Segundo, Grace and the Human Condition, 127-133.

<sup>119</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 48.

of history, but the locus of this salvific action resides in a particular people within specific contexts--e.g., the poor in Latin America. History will be redeemed by the struggle of these people. The promise of the kingdom and its realization within history symbolizes for the Christian this hope of redemption. As a result, an overriding desire to improve the quality of human existence emerges--the kingdom is synonymous with the humanizing process.

Many features of this new concept of humanity have already been alluded to in the discussion on the transformation of the church and society. What is important for liberation theology, however, is how this transformation occurs. Liberation theology rejects any suggestion that transformation can be understood in individualistic or ahistorical terms. Transformed people do not emerge by being "born again" or as the result of liberal development programs. People create their own history and thus transform themselves. The task of Christian faith is to liberate people from oppressive structures that prohibit this creative enterprise.

Up to this point we have seen that a liberation understanding of and response to violent revolution begins with the acceptance of the situation; elicits a response to the situation based on political and historical praxis; then attempts to transform the situation. We are now ready to explore the means by which this transformation is accomplished.

4.) The means employed. If the oppressed are to be

liberated in order to create their own history, the means of liberation must be efficacious. For the Christian there is the added dilemma that such action must be rooted in agape and faithful to a salvific mission. The problem faced by Christians is this: given the situation of the contemporary world, is Christian love and faith compatible with the revolutionary violence needed to bring about the necessary structural changes? As Bonino points out:

In today's world there is only one way to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, care for the sick and imprisoned--as Christ invited us to do: to change the structures of society which create and multiply every day those conditions. This is revolution.<sup>120</sup>

Consequently, Christian ethics is faced with two sets of complex and problematic relationships--the relationship between love, violence, and structural change; and the relationship between revolution, liberation, and critical reflection.

First, in Latin America Christian love must be expressed in a situation characterized by social, economic, and political oppression. The purpose of love in this situation is to liberate the victims from this structural oppression. These oppressive structures, however, are perpetuated through institutionalized forms of overt and covert violence.<sup>121</sup> Those attempting liberating change will need to employ

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<sup>120</sup> Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 44.

<sup>121</sup> See above, 10-13.

violence to accomplish their task--i.e., the violence of the status quo must be met with revolutionary violence.

Traditionally, violence has been rejected as a legitimate expression of Christian love. The violation of personhood in any form has been seen as the failure of love. Consequently, the Christian should avoid its use.<sup>122</sup> Liberation theologians argue, however, that this claim distorts the relationship between love and violence for two reasons.

1.) The recommendation that Christians refrain from using violence reflects an individualistic bias that is inappropriate for the modern condition of structural oppression. Within interpersonal relationships a Christian can live a relatively nonviolent life, but larger social and political relationships cannot escape different forms of overt and covert violence. The refusal to employ violence to achieve structural change makes Christian ethics irrelevant, or results in a moral silence that tacitly supports the oppression by the status quo.

2.) There is a fundamental difference between the violence used to perpetuate oppression and the violence employed to challenge it. Traditionally, violence used to support the status quo has been legitimate, whereas violence directed against the status quo has been condemned. This is the paradox between the "good" and "evil" uses of violence--

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<sup>122</sup>Except when employed by the state.

violence has a positive connotation when used by the existing order, but a negative one when it is used to oppose it. Such an understanding, however, is a distortion. As a Latin American publication indicates,

. . . let us by all means avoid equating the unjust violence of the oppressors (who maintain this despicable system) with the just violence of the oppressed (who feel obliged to use it to achieve their liberation).<sup>123</sup>

Violence per se is not a deterrent against Christians participating in class struggle--i.e., the use of violence has been morally justifiable when used to achieve acceptable goals. Unless one argues from a pacifist position, the violence involved in class struggle would not necessarily exclude Christians. As Bonino suggests:

It is frequently said today that the problem of violence is what deters--and should prevent--Christians from joining revolutionary movements. . . . But it should give us pause that Christian ethicists who have seldom questioned the use of violence for the preservation of the existing order have not paid attention to the fact that the word "violence" is almost exclusively applied in the Scriptures to the actions of unjust authorities (kings, priests, rich) and the oppressors of the people!<sup>124</sup>

In line with this biblical understanding, love cannot be concretely expressed in social and political relationships without attention directed toward the use of violence, or, as Segundo reiterates, "there is no concrete love without

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<sup>123</sup>As quoted in Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 108-109.

<sup>124</sup>Bonino, Christians and Marxists, 124.

violence."<sup>125</sup> The theological and ethical problem is not the use of violence, but how it is used and for what purposes.

With this understanding of the different uses of violence, the Christian conscience<sup>126</sup> is expressed in the struggle to build a just society. This entails revolutionary ferment on the part of the Christian--the only effective expression of love in oppressive situations.

[A]s awareness of existing legalized violence grows, the problem of counterviolence is no longer an abstract ethical concern. It now becomes very important on the level of political efficacy.<sup>127</sup>

Second, since there is no compelling theological or moral reason to prohibit the use of violence in achieving structural change, the Christian can legitimately participate in revolutionary movements as an act of liberation. This does not suggest that Christians casually engage in violent acts, or that participation is a necessary expression of faith. But given the structural realities of the Third World, revolutionary violence is often the most faithful expression of agape. Revolution is a difficult moral position that rests somewhere between a desperate attempt for change, and resistance to that change on the part of the status quo.

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<sup>125</sup> Juan Luis Segundo, Our Idea of God (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1974) 164.

<sup>126</sup> See Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 41-43.

<sup>127</sup> Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 103.

"Revolutionary change can be either violent or peaceful according to the relative interaction between pressure from below and resistance or flexibility for change from above."<sup>128</sup>

When Christians engage in revolution for the purpose of liberation, it is a conscious act which seeks to free the present and the future from the oppression and alienation of the past. "It is an act of rebellious presence in a historical context of slavery and domination. As such it implies more a break with the past than a desire for continuity."<sup>129</sup> Through this act of rebellion the church participates in the struggle between liberating violence and the violence of the status quo. In this violent confrontation the church lives out its mission. "The Church's mission is defined practically and theoretically, pastorally and theologically in relation to this revolutionary process."<sup>130</sup> The mission of the church in this context is that of a revolutionary force. In this sense, Che Guevara becomes more of a Christian symbol than the traditional ones that are linked to the tradition of oppression and exploitation.<sup>131</sup>

Through revolutionary activity the church incorporates

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<sup>128</sup>Bonino, Christians and Marxists, 21.

<sup>129</sup>Assmann, 114.

<sup>130</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 138.

<sup>131</sup>See Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 2-3.



its eschatological hope with historical strategy and tactics. Since the church performs its mission in a world demanding revolutionary change, its eschatological hope must be defined in appropriate terms. As Gutierrez explains:

. . . the world in which the Christian community must live and celebrate its eschatological hope is the world of social revolution; the Church's task must be defined in relation to this. Its fidelity to the Gospel leaves it no alternative: the Church must be the visible sign of the presence of the Lord within the aspiration for liberation and the struggle for a more human and just society. Only in this way will the message of love which the Church bears be made credible and efficacious.<sup>132</sup>

Revolution, therefore, makes possible the realization of the kingdom. This does not imply that revolution is synonymous with the kingdom but that the kingdom can only grow out of historical circumstances. In other words, the kingdom must be congruent with the social, political, and economic realities that precede it. It is a summons to the Christian for revolutionary action and commitment.

In practical terms, Christian theology and ethics must address the problems of strategy and tactics--i.e., how is liberation to be achieved in the modern world?<sup>133</sup> Given the vested interests, oppression, and violence of the status quo, the only available channel for liberation is the countervailing force of revolution. Without this countervailing force Christian hope, at its worst, supports oppression, or

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<sup>132</sup>Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, 262.

<sup>133</sup>See Assmann, 119-121.

at its best remains harmless and ineffective. This commitment to liberation requires violent means which are fraught with hazards, uncertainties, and ambiguities.

It is because of these hazards, uncertainties, and ambiguities that the Christian must engage in critical reflection on revolutionary praxis. Without critical reflection revolutionary activity runs the risk of justifying any means to realize its goals. As Bonino points out, revolution is entered into with a sense of tragedy that neither dehumanizes the enemy nor glorifies the revolutionary.

. . . how can rejection and active opposition, indeed hatred of the enemy which at a certain point incarnates the forces of injustice and inhumanity, be made in reality an instrument of love and redemption? How can they be neutralized in their long-term de-humanizing effects on the revolutionary forces and on the end result of revolution? How can the humanity of the enemy be preserved in the process of combating him?

Class war does not occur without subjective animosity and "individually" unmerited suffering. The objective inequality which a revolutionary process creates should not, nevertheless, be glamourised as moral vindication, least of all clothed with the eschatological colours of a final judgment.<sup>134</sup>

To ensure that revolutionary efforts do not degenerate into acts of vindication and revenge, the Christian should see revolution as having instrumental rather than intrinsic value. It is the liberating goal of revolution that is important and the object of critical reflection.<sup>135</sup> If a

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<sup>134</sup>Bonino, Christians and Marxists, 131.

<sup>135</sup>See *ibid.*, 129.

liberating revolution is to be truly Christian, it must be self-critical, and open to the changes and behavior that agape demands.

To summarize, the ethical judgment of revolution by liberation theology includes four phases. First, ethical analysis and judgment begins with a historical situation characterized by exploitation, oppression, and alienation. Second, the Christian response to this situation is a political and historical praxis motivated by agape. Third, through this praxis the church, society, and people are transformed. Fourth, this transformation is achieved in the liberation from oppressive political, social, and economic structures by means of revolution.

Liberation theology offers a far different ethical stance on revolution than those of the western theologians examined in the previous section. Thielicke's stress upon individual decision and his denial of any institutional involvement on the part of the church is rejected as tacitly supporting the oppression of the status quo. The church must actively express its solidarity with the poor in their struggle for liberation, and Christians must engage in a revolutionary praxis. Barth argues that the church must call an unjust state to repentance and assume responsibility for the ensuing struggle. Barth's assumption that "order" is a normative condition, however, reflects a western bourgeois ideology

that denies the legitimacy of revolutionary methods needed to achieve liberation. He wants to reform the structures, not transform them. Although Brown's ethic, like the liberation ethic, is motivated by love, his use of the just war doctrine reflects a dichotomy between theory and practice. Within liberation theology the proper Christian response to revolutionary situations is not to theorize about the moral uses of violence but to engage in revolutionary action and then reflect critically on the deeds. Finally, Yoder's nonviolent subordination does not address the central problem of structural violence and oppression. Although Yoder's ethic rejects the unjust structures of the status quo, he seeks merely to offer a Christian alternative rather than transformation. Yoder's position is perhaps heroic, but it lacks historical efficacy.

### Theological Assumptions

This section will compare and contrast the theological assumptions of the four western theologians with those of the liberation theologians. This will be accomplished by: 1.) briefly indicating the objections raised by liberation theology to traditional perspectives; and 2.) indicating alternative perspectives on these theological assumptions as offered by liberation theology.

A.) Dominant image of God. Thieliicke and Barth view God as transcendent. Liberation theology rejects this imagery

because of its nonhistorical character--i.e., God remains aloof from the historical struggle for liberation. The emphasis upon transcendence reflects western intellectual categories that maintain a dichotomy between spiritual and historical concerns. Consequently, historical existence is of secondary importance. Although Barth's stress upon God's role as judge adds a needed corrective, the historical expression of divine judgment represents an instrumental rather than intrinsic value--i.e., judgment refers to universal principles that are only tangentially affected by history. This emphasis upon transcendence does not provide an adequate basis or imagery for a historically efficacious faith.

Brown's and Yoder's emphasis upon God as an incarnate pursuer of justice and participant is more acceptable to liberation theology, but the means chosen to express the incarnational imagery are suspect. Although Brown's stress upon justice is welcomed, its historical importance is vague. Brown is unclear as to what divine justice looks like and how it is to be achieved. He shares a similar liability with Barth's notion of judgment in that his conception of justice is abstract and not explicitly lodged in historical experience. Yoder's argument that Jesus presents a normative model to be emulated simply fails to address the modern problem of structural oppression. The situation that Jesus faced is far different than what the modern Christian confronts in the Third World. Although Jesus represents important insights into the

meaning of incarnation, he is ill-equipped to provide the necessary imagery of God's participation in the historical process of liberation.

The dominant image of God in liberation theology is that of a historical liberator. God is revealed exclusively in history. This is not a pantheistic conception of divinity, but stresses only that which can be historically apprehended as being theologically and morally relevant. God's existence apart from history may be of speculative interest, but it is not a primary concern. With this stress on history, liberation theology emphasizes the incarnate aspect of God. This emphasis upon incarnation, however, is quite specific. It is not nature or history in general that God participates in but the struggle of a particular people--the poor and oppressed. Utilizing the biblical exodus motif, liberation theology argues that God "sides" with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for liberation. It is only through this struggle that God can be known because it is in such struggle that humanity enters into relationship with God. The dominant image of God, therefore, must be one that is appropriate to and grows out from this struggle, rather than images which are nonhistorical.

B.) Principal result of sin. Both Thielicke and Barth insist that anarchy is the principal result of sin. Liberation theology rejects this argument because it associates God's governance of the world with "established order" and,

thus, legitimizes the status quo. Oppressive social, political, and economic structures are seen as a bulwark against sin rather than its manifestation. Revolutionary action which seeks to transform these structures are, by definition, sinful and inappropriate for the Christian. Although Barth argues that injustice is also a result of sin, he encourages reform rather than radical transformation. The situation is altered in order to remove causes of anarchy, but the structures as such are preserved.

Yoder's argument that the principal result of sin is a fallen world is too vague and nonhistorical. By viewing the world in a fallen condition, there are no specific actions or practices that can be identified as being sinful. History itself is virtually synonymous with a sinful state of being. This leaves the Christian no room to maneuver within history because any effort to change it would be inconsequential--i.e., even if fallen structures were to be transformed, they would still be sinful because they are historical. Yoder has relegated the Christian moral life historically ineffective.

Liberation theology agrees with Brown that the principal result of sin is systemic violence and structural oppression. This oppression is based on sinful and exploitive relationships between rich and poor, and results in alienation. This alienation reinforces moral and cultural autonomy instead of solidarity. Sin, therefore, is neither a psychological nor spiritual condition of the individual but an empirical

and historical reality that is exhibited in oppressive structures.

C.) Principal sign of salvation. Thielicke and Yoder advocate nonhistorical signs of salvation. These signs are rejected by liberation theology for different reasons. First, Thielicke implies that salvation is an individual affair and reflects an inward or psychological disposition. However, from a liberation point of view such a "salvific sign" is irrelevant because it has no historical efficacy. It is structural relationships, not individual existence, that needs salvation. Second, Yoder argues that the principal sign of salvation is seen in a community of faith that withdraws from the world. This implies, however, that salvation is experienced in a "reality" different from the historical experiences of the world. Although it could be argued that this community creates its own history, it is a history that is inconsequential to the overall experience of humanity. It reflects a narrow salvation history rather than a comprehensive salvation of history.

Liberation theology agrees with Barth's and Brown's emphasis on social justice but expresses two reservations. First, Barth's understanding of justice is too ideologically laden. Whereas Barth sees social, political, and economic injustice as evil within the structures, liberation theology views the entire structure as corrupt. Barth's understanding, in this regard, reflects a surgical attempt at salvation



rather than a process of death and resurrection--i.e., structural transformation. Second, Brown's concept of justice is abstract. Brown gives little indication as to how just (i.e., redeemed) structures would look. An abstract principle of justice has little historical efficacy because strategy and tactics cannot bring about its realization. Salvation is left dangling in a historical vacuum.

For liberation theology the principal sign of salvation is class struggle and structural transformation. The salvific process is concretely expressed through revolutionary struggle which seeks to transform social, political, and economic structures. Salvation, therefore, has a specific meaning and location in history because it responds directly to the structural reality of sin. Unlike any of the western theologians, this emphasis on class struggle and structural transformation explicitly signifies the historical efficacy of salvation by addressing its structural mode of existence.

D. Ecclesial role in revolution. Liberation theology rejects each of the western theologians' positions on the role of the church in a revolutionary situation. Thieliicke argues that the primary role of the church is spiritual and pastoral. Such a role, however, reinforces the control of the status quo because the struggle needed to bring about fundamental structural change becomes secondary. The individuals involved in the struggle are addressed, rather than the reasons and goals of the conflict.

Barth maintains that the proper ecclesial role is suffering and the assumption of social and political responsibility. Although the suffering of the church in oppressive situations is commendable, it remains questionable if Barth's understanding of responsibility would permit the church to employ the necessary revolutionary means to achieve a truly liberated and just society. Barth's position places the church in a mediating, rather than liberating, role.

Brown's position is vague. He does not explicitly state if Christian involvement in changing oppressive structures is confined to individuals or includes institutional involvement on the part of the church. If the former is the case, there is little assurance that Christian faith will exert significant revolutionary leadership. If the latter is true, no suggestions are offered as to how institutional involvement would be motivated and implemented.

Although liberation theology agrees with Yoder in that the church must be a witnessing community in a revolutionary situation, such witness should lead to involvement in that struggle and not sectarian withdrawal. Even though Yoder claims that a sectarian position represents a revolutionary subordination, his position does not address or hope to change the oppressive structures. The sectarian position is not historically efficacious (which Yoder claims is consistent with a faithful eschatology) and is, therefore, inconsistent with the church's salvific mission.

For liberation theology the proper ecclesial role is that of solidarity with the poor as a salvific sign. Since the mission of the church is the salvation of history, it must side with the poor and oppressed in their struggle for liberation. In so doing the church, as a community that exists for others, becomes a historical sign of this salvific process. This means that if the salvation which the church signifies is to have an empirical and historical content, it cannot avoid the structural realities which confront it in the modern world. For the church to remain faithful to its mission, there can be no retreat to individualism, mediation, or sectarian withdrawal. The church must adopt a stance of revolutionary solidarity with those who will save history.

E. Eschatology. Thielicke implies that eschatological hope is individual and nonhistorical. Liberation theology rejects this understanding because a historically inefficacious eschatology is divorced from both Christian moral action and the salvific mission of the church. For Thielicke, hope is at best an appendix to Christian faith and ethics, rather than a motivating force for moral action within history.

Although liberation theology agrees with Barth's notion that eschatological hope incorporates a political reality, it rejects the principle that the state is a precursor of the kingdom. The state as it now exists is instead a demonic force that stands in the way of the kingdom. The

present state and the structures it supports must be swept away before the kingdom can emerge. Imagery for the kingdom is drawn from acts of liberation, not from the political structures that make liberation necessary.

Yoder's paradoxical tranhistorical and historical eschatology is confusing. Although Yoder argues that Christian faith and action has historical consequences, the ultimate concern is not to make sure history turns out right. Christians are to be faithful rather than effective. What is perplexing about Yoder's position, from a liberation point of view, is the dichotomy between faith and historical action. Christians are called to live out their faith and hope within history, but they are denied the necessary means to achieve the structural changes needed to realize the kingdom in historical terms. In other words, faith has no method of expression within the historical milieu it is required to live in. Here, liberation theology raises the question of effective faith.

Liberation theology agrees with Brown that eschatological hope is historical and present, but would further insist that it must be articulated and acted upon in structural terms. The kingdom is to be identified with specific social, political, and economic structures that are quite unlike those of the status quo. Revolutionary action transforms existing structures in order to realize the vision of an alternative society, thus enabling the salvific mission

of the church. The kingdom is dependent upon its antecedent historical and structural situation. This requires specific action on the part of the church to make the kingdom possible. Any eschatology that is not pertinent to the present historical situation is fantasy and not hope.

Now that the western and liberation perspectives (see Diagram 3.3) have been compared and contrasted, we can move on to the final phase of this project--i.e., exposing First World Christians to these various perspectives within the context of the revolutionary conditions of the Third World.

Diagram 3.3

THE THEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND ETHICAL  
JUDGMENTS OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Dominant Image of God	Historical Liberator
Principal Result of Sin:	Structural Oppression
Principal Sign of Salvation:	Class Struggle and Structural Transformation
Ecclesial Role in Revolution:	Solidarity With the Poor
Eschatology:	Historical/Structural Hope
Ethical Stance Toward Revolution:	Revolutionary Liberation
Authority, Scope, and Locus of Ethic:	Historical/Contextual/Structural

## CHAPTER 4

## EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Up to this point we have examined the revolutionary conditions of the Third World, the historical Christian attitudes toward the state and the use of violence both to preserve and challenge political authority. In addition, we have also examined four modern western perspectives on revolution and their critique by liberation theology. In the final phase of this project we shall attempt to create a situation in which First World Christians can offer theological and ethical judgments on revolution within a context that simulates the conditions of the Third World. This will be accomplished through an educational curriculum that addresses both the issues raised by this project and the cognitive, affective, and developmental needs of the students. The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is: 1.) to briefly examine the cognitive, affective, and developmental needs of the audience for which the educational curriculum is designed, as well as the appropriateness of simulation game methodology in addressing those needs; and 2.) to construct an educational curriculum that addresses the needs identified above, as well as the theological and ethical issues raised in this project.

## STUDENT NEEDS AND EDUCATIONAL METHODOLOGY

Age Group and Educational Needs

This educational curriculum is designed for young and middle-aged adults. As a variety of educators have argued,<sup>1</sup> and effective and relevant educational methodology must address the cognitive, affective, and developmental needs of the students, as well as transmit the desired information. The developmental theories by Erik Erikson and Lawrence Kohlberg aid in determining these needs.

According to Erikson, the major developmental concerns of young and middle-aged adults are shared relationships and generativity respectively.<sup>2</sup> For young adults the principal crisis is the conflict between intimacy and isolation. For middle-aged adults it is a question of being victimized by events or assuming responsibility, of being stagnant or creative. This educational curriculum, therefore, seeks to meet these needs as identified by Erikson.

It may appear, however, that the developmental needs

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<sup>1</sup>See John L. Elias, Psychology and Religious Education (Bethlehem: Catechetical Communications, 1975) James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981) Charles R. Kniker, You and Values Education (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill, 1977) Mary M. Wilcox, Developmental Journey (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979)

<sup>2</sup>See Erik H. Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis (New York: Norton, 1968) and Identity and the Life Cycle (New York: International University, 1959)

of these two age groups are so different that a single educational approach would prove ineffective. Although such differences do present limitations, there are enough common characteristics to make the approach possible. For instance, the two groups possess similar abilities to think abstractly and use hypothetical deductive reasoning. An educational curriculum can be designed that presents a common resource of intellectual or cognitive material, while at the same time facilitating developmental growth at a personal level.<sup>3</sup>

Erikson's developmental stage theory is obviously geared toward personal needs and concerns. It might appear that his theories would not lend themselves to the problem raised in this project. However, the developmental questions he identifies have social implications as well. For example, the primary concerns of young adults center around relationships: marriage, family, adult relationships with parents, etc. These questions imply larger contexts (such as community responsibilities and moral conduct in various types of relationships). With young adulthood moral questions and concerns take on a social dimension beyond those that are personal. This is because young adults are beginning to assume a greater

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<sup>3</sup>Within the curriculum there are several opportunities for small group interaction which would allow individuals with similar developmental needs to work together. Thus, the educational experience itself would address both the cognitive content of the material to be examined, as well as the personal developmental needs of the students.



responsibility for their world, which implies larger social relationships other than just family and friends. The questions of middle-aged adults center around the question of generativity: community leadership, creativity, exploration of new work and service opportunities, etc. Again, there are implicit social and moral implications in this developmental stage because middle-aged adults have assumed major responsibilities for society. Attention is directed toward social relationships that extend beyond others known on an individual basis. Although Erikson's developmental stages are of limited use in directly addressing the problem raised in this project, his insights and research have social and ethical implications which cannot be ignored in curriculum design and development. It is not coincidental that the ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr insisted that moral decision-making takes place within a series of triads in which a particular context is a dominant concern.<sup>4</sup>

Niebuhr argued that we make moral decisions within relationships between the self, the other, and the larger social context. The decision is one that is fitting to this relationship or triad. Therefore, a proper understanding of the self, the other, and the context is required before a fitting response can be offered. In short, the developmental

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<sup>4</sup>See H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (New York: Harper & Row, 1963)

needs of participants in these triads cannot be ignored if fitting responses are to be formulated--the self and the other includes both cognitive and affective needs, and perceptions of the context which must also be considered.

Lawrence Kohlberg's moral developmental stages also provided useful insights for the construction of this curriculum. John L. Elias argues that Kohlberg's contribution to Christian or religious education is fourfold. First, within Kohlberg's system religious values, such as freedom, are affirmed. Second, Kohlberg maintains that people must accept responsibility for their actions and decisions, a belief that shares similarities with Christian ethical reflection--i.e., individuals, as moral agents, assume responsibility for their actions. Third, Kohlberg recognizes the necessity and desirability for the development of conscience. Fourth, Kohlberg places great stress upon the concept or principle of justice.<sup>5</sup> Kohlberg's four emphases lend themselves to a theological and ethical discussion of the problem raised in this project. Both theological reflection and Kohlberg's research indicate that the problem of revolution, from an educational point of view, must be approached from a perspective that takes seriously the concepts of human freedom, responsibility, conscience, and justice.

In addition, Kohlberg's moral developmental stages<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See Elias, 78-79. <sup>6</sup>See Appendix, 223.

are beneficial for two reasons. First, the stress upon ethical and moral questions helps in communicating the information pertinent to the problem raised in this project, and would stimulate ethical and theological discussion among participants engaged in the educational experience. Since Kohlberg claims that his research findings are universal, his moral developmental stages provide a means for discussion that transcend the cultural differences between First and Third World perspectives. In other words, dialogue could occur between individuals holding different cultural and theological perspectives that is based on a moral developmental pattern common to various viewpoints.

Second, Kohlberg's moral developmental stages can be employed in such a manner that persons at "higher" stages of development could influence the development of persons at "lower" stages. For example, this curriculum assumes that many of the participants would be classified at the fourth or fifth level of Kohlberg's stages.<sup>7</sup> Since most individuals can learn concepts that are a step "above" their own developmental stage, the curriculum incorporates moral concepts which emphasize the development of social contract and conscience.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>See note #6.

<sup>8</sup>Kohlberg's postconventional stages. This does not eliminate participants from the conventional developmental stages, but requires that the teacher needs to be aware of the different levels of moral reasoning that will be present in the discussions and playing of the simulation game.

Therefore, both the formal written material and the informal discussions would facilitate the moral development of the participants.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, there are three educational settings toward which this curriculum is aimed: 1.) church school settings; 2.) campus ministry settings; and 3.) college and seminary classroom settings. In each setting certain changes in procedure and format would be required.<sup>10</sup> The curriculum that will be presented is easily adaptable.

### Goals and Objectives

There are four specific goals and objectives within this curriculum: 1.) to communicate the problem of revolution and related issues; 2.) to create a sense of participation within the context of the problem; 3.) to stimulate moral and theological reflection on the problem of revolution; and 4.) to stimulate theological dialogue between First World (traditional) and Third World (liberation) perspectives.

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<sup>9</sup>The curriculum encourages both formal and informal contact between individuals of different moral developmental levels. According to Kohlberg, moral developmental learning occurs at a "one stage above" sequence. Students would facilitate their own moral development through participation in the educational experience itself, and through informal interaction with other students.

<sup>10</sup>In settings where students already possess extensive knowledge of the Third World and ethical issues regarding revolution, sessions one and two could be deleted.

## Methodology

In order to meet the cognitive, developmental, and affective needs of the participants, as well as the stated goals and objectives, the primary methodology employed in this curriculum is simulation gaming.

Historically, simulations and simulation games<sup>11</sup> have been used in the physical and social sciences to test theories and models in controlled situations. Laboratory situations have been created in which both objects and subjects can be observed, and data collected. Or as John R. Raser argues,

. . . simulations are valuable because they allow phenomena to be reproduced, and thus (1) enable the experimenter to derive statistical probabilities when the outcome is uncertain, and/or (2) enable him to vary numerous aspects of the system in ways that yield profitable insights into how the system operates. In other words, simulations allow experiments to be made that would otherwise be impossible.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, simulations have been used to recreate historical social systems and situations, construct models of existing systems, and create theoretical or probable future situations. Such models enable the researcher to refine his or her analysis, as well as lend additional data for theory construction.<sup>13</sup> This use of simulations allows individuals

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<sup>11</sup>For a discussion concerning the differences between "simulations" and "simulation gaming," see John R. Raser, Simulation and Society (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1969) 3-19.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 18. <sup>13</sup>See *ibid.*, 19-29.

from selected disciplines to participate in educational experiences that will familiarize them with specific problems and issues. These experiences are then utilized in "real" situations. Disciplines which frequently use this educational methodology include political science, military science, sociology, economics, history, social psychology, and professional preparation for medicine, law, and ministry.<sup>14</sup> The use of simulation games in these fields has effectively combined cognitive and affective teaching techniques. Simulation games provide a bridge between the "theoretical" and "practical" needs of both students and researchers.

In recent years simulation games have been used as an educational methodology at a variety of age levels. The primary goal is to communicate information in an environment relevant to the particular needs of the student. From this perspective, there is both an "objective" transfer of information from teacher to student, as well as a "subjective" experience (on the part of the student) with the material being examined. Or as Clark C. Abt maintains:

Games are effective teaching and training devices for students of all ages in many situations because they are highly motivating, and because they communicate very efficiently the concepts and facts of many subjects. They create dramatic representations of the real problem being studied. The players assume realistic roles, face

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<sup>14</sup>For examples of simulations and simulation games used in various disciplines and professional education, see *ibid.*, 46-65.

problems, formulate strategies, make decisions, and get fast feedback on the consequences of their action.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the use of educational simulation games has allowed objective facts to be learned quickly, while at the same time encouraging abstract thinking and discussion based on participation in concrete situations or contexts. A variety of the students' developmental, cognitive, and affective needs are simultaneously met. As Abt has summarized:

Self-directed learning in games occurs in three, usually successive, phases as a result of active participation and intense involvement of the student:

1. Learning facts expressed in the game context and dynamics;
2. Learning processes simulated by the game;
3. Learning the relative costs and benefits, risks and potential rewards of alternative strategies of decision-making.<sup>16</sup>

Abt's summary is important for this project in that simulation games facilitate the learning of objective information, encourage the process of theory construction (in the case of this curriculum, theological theory construction), and introduce alternative decision-making possibilities.

In conclusion, there are three reasons why a simulation game provides an appropriate methodology for meeting the age group developmental needs previously identified, as well as the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

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<sup>15</sup>Clark C. Abt., Serious Games (New York: Viking, 1970) 13.

<sup>16</sup>Abt in Boocock and Schild, 78.

First, the personal developmental needs identified by Erikson would be indirectly addressed since the dynamics and structure of the simulation game encourages questions of ethical conduct in relationships, the acceptance of responsibility, and creativity. In addition, the cognitive and affective needs of these age groups will be addressed through the interaction of abstract or theological principles with a simulated condition that reflects an actual situation or context. In other words, developmental and affective needs would be addressed within a simulated condition that reflects the problem being investigated.

Second, Kohlberg's moral developmental stages would be engaged since the simulation game demands various levels of moral reasoning and simulated action. Participation on the part of the students would require personal reflection upon their moral stances, encouraging progressive moral development. In addition, since the context of the game (the Third World) would be unfamiliar to many of the participants, Kohlberg's thesis that his developmental stages are universal could be tested.<sup>17</sup> If Kohlberg's thesis is correct, the participants will make the transition to an unfamiliar context, while maintaining (or improving) their level of moral

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<sup>17</sup>The scope of this project prohibits the testing of this claim. But I am suggesting that research could be conducted in conjunction with the game to test Kohlberg's claims of universal moral development patterns, and the consistency of moral reasoning by the game's participants.



reasoning and action.

Third, this simulation game will directly confront the problem of a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution in the Third World, while at the same time meeting the goals and objectives of the curriculum. Through the structure of the game, the problem of revolution and its ethical and theological implications will be communicated by simulating a selected Third World situation. By "playing" the simulation game, students would have a sense of participating in the problem. Since the game will be played within a Christian or religious educational environment, theological reflection would be both explicit and implicit. The structure and dynamics of the simulation game will engage participants in dialogue between First World (traditional) and Third World (liberation) theological perspectives within a specific context, rather than a vacuum.

#### CURRICULUM OUTLINE

This section outlines a curriculum that utilizes the educational methodology examined in the previous section. There are three sessions in the curriculum. The first two sessions introduce the context of the Third World, the problem of revolution, historical and traditional Christian responses to this problem, and the response of liberation theology. These sessions will utilize proposed or theoretical resources (e.g., film strips or video tapes, student resources, and a

resource manual) based on material adapted from this project. The third session consists of a simulation game, with components and instructions explicitly presented.

### Background Information

Title: The Third World, Revolution, and the Church

Age Group: Adult

Number of Sessions: 3, or more

Time: 4 hours minimum

Teaching Components:

- Teacher's Manual
- Resource Manual<sup>18</sup>
- Student Booklets<sup>19</sup>
- Two Film Strips or Video Tapes
- Simulation Game (instructions and components)

Resources to be supplied by teacher:

- Film strip projector or video equipment
- Paper and writing instruments
- Duplication equipment
- Large room (smaller rooms will also be needed if a large group will be playing the simulation game)

### First Session

Title: The Third World, Revolution, and Liberation Theology

Time: 1 hour minimum

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<sup>18</sup>The Resource Manual would consist of appropriate additional readings, largely adapted from this project.

<sup>19</sup>The Student Booklets would consist of short readings adapted from this project, the Student Resources as identified in the curriculum, and the Personal Journal.

Purpose: To introduce the context of the Third World, the problem of revolution, and liberation theology.

### I. Introduction

1. Explain course and materials.
2. Introduce the problem of a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution. (Student Resource #1 (located in the Student Booklet): This resource would consist of a brief summary of the problem of revolution, and why this problem is an important concern for Christians. The Resource Manual would also contain references for additional information.
3. Solicit student opinions or definitions of the terms "Third World," "violence," and "revolution." (Student Resource #2: This resource would provide space for students to record their initial definitions.)

### II. Film Strip or Video Tape #1 (The film strip or video tape would define terms discussed above; introduce the social, political, and economic conditions of the Third World; and examine its revolutionary situation.)

1. Discuss and review film strip or video tape. (Student Resource #3: This resource would contain a summary of the definition of the terms "Third World," "violence," and "revolution," as presented in the film strip or video tape. References would also be made where additional information could be found in the Resource Manual.)
2. Introduce liberation theology. (Student Resource #4: This resource would consist of brief statements concerning the basic ideas of liberation theology. References would also be made where additional information could be found in the Resource Manual.)

### III. Debrief

1. Divide into small groups and discuss the following questions:
  - A.) As a Christian, how do you react to the conditions of the Third World?
  - B.) What is your response to liberation theology?
  - C.) As a small group, write a one-sentence statement about what the role of the church should be in the

revolutionary situation of the Third World. This statement will be shared with the larger group.

2. Continue debriefing in large group by soliciting small group statements. Encourage additional comments and questions.
3. Indicate that the purpose of this session was to introduce the problems of the Third World, revolution, the role of the church, and to stimulate initial responses on the part of the students. Emphasize that there are no right or wrong opinions. In addition, stress that a wide variety of both "positive" and "negative" emotions are being experienced, and that such ambiguity is normal and healthy.
4. Have students write initial entries in their "Personal Journals" (provided in the Student Booklet).
5. Close in a manner appropriate to your group.

### Second Session

Title: Historical and Theological Understandings of Violence and Revolution

Time: 1 hour minimum

Purpose: To examine, compare and contrast the historical and theological understandings of violence and revolution that have grown out of various western Christian traditions.

#### I. Introduction

1. Encourage students to review their initial entries in their Personal Journals.
2. Solicit responses and comments students might wish to share with the group.
3. Introduce the purpose of this session.

#### II. Film Strip or Video Tape #2 (This resource will introduce the following topics):

1. Development of the church's understanding of the role and authority of the state:

- A.) New Testament concepts
  - B.) Church and state conflicts in the Roman Empire
  - C.) Post-Constantinian concepts
  - D.) Reformation concepts
2. Development of the church's response to violence employed by the state:
    - A.) Pacifism
    - B.) Just War
    - C.) Crusade
  3. Development of theological understandings of the use of violence to oppose the state:
    - A.) Roman Catholic
    - B.) Lutheran
    - C.) Reformed
    - D.) Pacific Anabaptists
    - E.) Violent Anabaptists
  4. Review film strip or video tape and solicit responses from students. (Student Resource #5: This resource would consist of summarized material which appeared in the film strip or video tape. References would also be made where additional information could be found in the Resource Manual.)

### III. Contemporary Theological Perspectives

1. Helmut Thielicke
2. Karl Barth
3. Robert McAfee Brown
4. John Howard Yoder

(Student Resource #6: This resource would consist of brief summaries of these theologians' positions. References would also be made where additional information could be found in the Resource Manual.)

#### IV. Debrief

1. Divide into small groups according to interest in a particular theologian (small groups do not need to be even).
2. Have each group critique their selected theologian using the following guidelines (Student Resource #7: This resource would indicate the guidelines):
  - A.) Based on your understanding of Christian faith, what do you think are your theologian's strongest points? Weakest points?
  - B.) Based on what you know about the Third World, do you think that this theologian's perspective on revolution is applicable? Why or why not?
3. In the large group have each small group summarize their critique.
4. Solicit any additional questions or comments.
5. Encourage students to make another entry in their Personal Journals.
6. Explain that the next session will be longer and will include participating in a simulation game.
7. Close in a manner appropriate to your group.

#### Third Session (simulation game)

#### TEACHER'S MANUAL

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Title: The Church and Revolution

Age Group: Adult

Time: 2 hours minimum

Number of Participants: 10 minimum, plus teacher

## PURPOSE

The purpose of "The Church and Revolution" is to provide a simulation of the revolutionary conditions of the Third World, and the issues faced there by the church. Participants will be encouraged to reflect and respond in ways that are consistent with their developing perspectives and knowledge.

## GOALS

This simulation game has three goals:

1. To encourage personal reflection on the revolutionary situation of the Third World.
2. To engage in a critical analysis of traditional theological and ethical positions on revolution within the context of the Third World.
3. To expose the participants to theological and ethical perspectives that have developed within the Third World.

## COMPONENTS

1. National Situation Statement (1 for each participant)
2. Church Situation Statement (1 for each participant)
3. Special Interest Party Summary (1 for each participant)
4. Special Interest Party Portfolios (5 different ones)
5. Situational Change Announcements (5 different ones)
6. Results Table (1 for teacher only)

## ADDITIONAL NEEDS

1. Large room (arranged as a convention hall)
2. Small conference rooms (or areas in large room)
3. Writing materials

## SITUATION

The nation of "Trios Cosmos" is on the verge of a violent revolution. The "United Church of Trios Cosmos" has called a Council to draft a resolution regarding the approaching revolution. Opinions in the Church range from the desire for noninvolvement in the conflict to support for the revolution. Half of the delegates to the Council are noncommitted. They must be persuaded by members of the "special interest parties" who are also delegates at the Council. Both the national leaders of Trios Cosmos and the revolutionaries are awaiting the outcome of the Council, and have threatened reprisals for any action the Church might take.

## ROLE ASSIGNMENTS AND TASKS

The teacher acts as the President of the Council. The President presides at all meetings of the Council and is the interpreter of rules for the simulation game. All other participants are voting delegates. Assigned or volunteered roles are as follows:

50% -- Noncommitted delegates

50% -- Special interest party members:

- 10% -- Non-Involvement Party
- 10% -- Non-Violent Reform Party
- 10% -- Just Revolution Party
- 10% -- The Liberation Party
- 10% -- The Witness Party

The tasks for the delegates are as follows:

Noncommitted delegates -- To vote in favor of one of the special interest parties' resolutions presented to the Council.

Special interest parties -- To write and present proposed resolutions which represent their respective positions. They should also lobby the noncommitted delegates to vote in favor of their resolutions when presented to the Council.



## TIME ALLOTMENTS

After participants have been briefed on their roles and procedures, the following time allotments are suggested for playing the game:

- 10 minutes -- Initial assembly of the Council
- 40 minutes -- Preparation of resolutions and lobbying
- 30 minutes -- Presentation of resolutions and voting
- 40 minutes -- Debrief
- 120 minutes -- Total (minimum)

Use more time if possible, extending each period as necessary or productive for the class.

## PROCEDURE

### Initial Assembly

All delegates should be assembled together. The President will open the Council, explain its purpose, review the procedures, and distribute a copy of the "National Situation Statement," "Church Situation Statement," and "Special Interest Party Summary" to each delegate. The President will then recess the Council for the preparation and lobbying period.

### Preparation and Lobbying Period

During this period the special interest parties should meet in their assigned conference rooms (or areas) to write their resolutions. The "Special Interest Party Portfolios" will be distributed by the President to the appropriate groups. These portfolios will provide guidelines for the tasks of the respective parties. The special interest parties should also use this time to lobby noncommitted delegates.

Noncommitted delegates should discuss issues with each other and with representatives of the special interest parties. They should also consider the national situation as it changes throughout the period. (See below)

Throughout this period the President will release or announce a "National Situation Change." The details of these changes will also be indicated by the President. These changes may result in modifications of proposals by the special interest

parties, or may imply that a special interest party should disband and join its efforts with another party. Many possibilities are open and should be considered by the delegates.\*

\*If the game is being played on minimum time (2 hours), the "National Situation Change" should only be used once. If additional time is allotted, from one to five changes may be selected by the President.

### Presentations of Resolutions and Voting of the Council

The President will recall the delegates. Each special interest party has five minutes to present its resolution to the Council and appeal to the noncommitted delegates for their support. If additional time is allotted, debate may take place among the delegates following the presentation of the resolutions.

After the resolutions have been presented, a vote of the delegates is taken by the President. This may be accomplished through secret ballot, roll call, or an appropriate alternative as determined by the President. Results will be tabulated by the President and reported to the Council. Plurality carries a resolution. The President will then indicate the probable effects of the adopted resolution by referring to the "Results Table."

### Debrief

If a large group is involved, break down into smaller groups.

Guidelines for debriefing:

1. Solicit feelings and reactions.
2. Discuss the implications for the church in Trios Cosmos regarding the resolution passed by the Council.
3. Identify and discuss the adequacy of the theological perspectives that were expressed and acted upon in the game. What differing views of God and the church were expressed by the special interest parties?
4. Discuss the problem of violence. Are there ways the church could help to alleviate the violence? What are some ways that both First and Third World Christians could help in this situation?

5. Discuss how liberation theology grew out of the context simulated in the game. How does liberation theology address the issues that were raised in the game? Does liberation theology help to clarify the problems facing the church in the Third World? Why, or why not?
6. Solicit any final comments.
7. Close in a manner appropriate to your group.

## GAME COMPONENTS

### NATIONAL SITUATION STATEMENT<sup>20</sup>

#### History

In the mid-nineteenth century a war of independence was waged that ended two centuries of European colonial control of Trios Cosmos. Leaders of this war of independence, however, soon dominated the political, social, and economic structures of the new nation. A rigid society has developed in which political and military elites dominate the government. This ruling elite increasingly depends upon the United States and western European nations for economic and military assistance.

#### Type of Government

The government of Trios Cosmos is a dictatorship. Free elections have not been held in the twentieth century. There is no functional constitution, and judicial appointments come exclusively from elite families. Corruption and inefficiency characterize the bureaucracy. Social services are minimal, and only the military receives adequate funding from the government. The press and other media are rigidly controlled. Opposition to the current regime is suppressed through violent and often brutal means.

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<sup>20</sup>One copy for each participant.

### Economic and Social Situation

There is a wide gap between rich and poor. Approximately 15% of the population owns 80% of the wealth and property. There is a small middle class primarily in the cities, but it is rapidly disappearing due to inflation. Prices for food, shelter and other necessities are high. Although primarily an agricultural nation, cities are growing rapidly, due to consistent crop failures and farmers being displaced by large corporations buying or appropriating land.

### Poverty and Violence

Poverty and violence characterize the lives of most people in Trios Cosmos. Annual per capita income is well below \$1,000. Housing, sanitation facilities, and transportation are inadequate. The majority is illiterate, and diets are below the subsistence level. Health care facilities are over crowded in the cities, and virtually non-existent in the rural areas. Periodic plagues and famine are common. There is little social mobility, and few individuals escape the poverty they are born into. The police often brutalize the poor, and punishment for crimes is severe. The secret police will often "visit" suspected dissidents late at night and "take them away." Poverty and violence are daily experiences for many people in Trios Cosmos.

### Growing Revolutionary Activity

In response to the conditions in Trios Cosmos, a revolutionary party has been growing in both the cities and rural areas. The revolutionaries advocate a violent and comprehensive change in the social, economic, and political structures of their nation. In the past they enjoyed little popular support, but they are becoming increasingly well-armed and forceful, and their popular support is growing. In response, the government has become repressive in its counter-revolutionary activity. The prisons of Trios Cosmos are filled with political prisoners. Revolutionary ideology is becoming increasingly Marxist, and the revolutionaries resent the support the government receives from the United States and western European nations.

### Miscellaneous Concerns

Trios Cosmos is polarized between support for the government and the revolution. It is a matter of time before the revolutionaries possess the necessary weaponry to launch a major assault against the government. In reaction to this threat, the government has imposed "extreme measures" to maintain "law and order." There are still some influential individuals who believe that nonviolent reform is possible, but there is little time left for such efforts.

## CHURCH SITUATION STATEMENT<sup>21</sup>

### History

The United Church of Trios Cosmos was established by missionaries from the United States and Europe. Until recently, Church leadership and clerical training has been dominated by these foreign nations. Although most of the clergy are now indigenous, the Church still receives financial assistance from United States and European churches. There is growing resentment, however, about this history of foreign domination.

### Relationship With Government

Traditionally, the relationship between church and state in Trios Cosmos has been friendly and supportive. The current dictator assumes that his interests are synonymous with those of the Church. Historically, ecclesiastical leaders have not questioned this assumption. Recently, however, some Church leaders have challenged government policies. There is a fear within the Church, however, that reaction against this type of activism would include the seizure of Church property and imprisonment of suspected clergy.

### Relationship With Population

The United Church of Trios Cosmos is a respected and influential institution, especially among the poor. Traditionally,

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<sup>21</sup>One copy for each participant.

the Church has confined its role to pastoral functions and meeting the "spiritual" needs of the people. In addition, it has also engaged in limited charitable work such as building hospitals and schools. Increasingly, however, some clergy are "speaking out" on issues and openly challenging government policies. In this respect, Church discipline has broken down because ecclesiastical leaders are uncomfortable with these "radicals" but recognize their popularity and influence among the poor. If the Church exhibits support for reform or revolution, it is assumed that the elites will cut off their support.

### Relationship With Revolutionaries

At first the revolutionaries viewed the United Church of Trios Cosmos with suspicion, due to its historic support of the government. Some of the clergy, however, are starting to lend their support to the revolution. Some revolutionaries view the Church as a potential source of support, but overall the Church is deeply split over the issue. The use of violence to achieve social, economic, and political change is the principal concern since official doctrine does not provide clear guidance.

### Participation in Economic System

The United Church of Trios Cosmos is a wealthy institution. The primary source of its income comes from endowments given to it by elites. The Church is also a large land owner, and it indirectly receives benefits due to the misery of the rural poor. The Church is uncomfortable with this situation, but it is hesitant to change its policies for fear that its land might be confiscated by the government. In addition, the revolutionaries have advocated a redistribution of rural land. This would mean that the Church would lose much of its property and income. From this perspective, the revolutionaries view the Church as an enemy unless it is willing to work for radical land reform.

### Miscellaneous Concerns

In view of the approaching revolution, the United Church of Trios Cosmos faces four dilemmas:

1. It must determine whether violence is morally justifiable in the approaching confrontation, and what the Church's role, if any, should be.
2. If the Church supports the government, it will then become a target of the revolution. In addition, if the revolution is successful, the Church's position and influence in Trios Cosmos will be severely limited.
3. If the Church supports the revolution, it will suffer immediate persecution by the government. If the revolution is successful, the Church will be forced to divest itself of much of its land and wealth.
4. The Church must develop a theological understanding of its role in the approaching conflict. Central to this task will be its understanding of the use of violence, and whether peaceful alternatives are possible.

### SPECIAL INTEREST PARTY SUMMARY<sup>22</sup>

#### Background

In Trios Cosmos various Christian perspectives have developed regarding the Church's response to the approaching revolution. These perspectives or "parties" are represented at the Council. They will try to persuade noncommitted delegates to support their position and vote for their proposal. Described below are brief summaries of the special interest parties and possible results if their proposals are adopted by the Council.

#### Descriptions and Results

Non-Involvement Party:	Believes that the Church should avoid taking sides in the conflict--individuals must make their own decisions. The principal task of the Church is to provide spiritual guidance in the approaching crisis.
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<sup>22</sup>One copy for each participant.

If this position is adopted by the Council, the Church will continue to receive strong support from the government. It will also become an enemy of the revolution.

Non-Violent Reform Party:

Believes that the Church should work for social change, but it should never support acts of violence against the state. The Church should work within the system and reform it.

If this position is adopted by the Council, the Church will lose some governmental support. It will also be viewed by the revolutionaries as being "too little, too late."

Just Revolution Party:

Believes that the situation is drastic but does not yet warrant a violent response. Peaceful reform should first be tried, and if this fails, criteria should be established for determining when Christians could support the revolution.

If this position is adopted by the Council, both the government and the revolutionaries will see it as a compromised gesture. Reprisals from either side will depend on future actions by the Church.

The Liberation Party:

Believes that the situation is desperate. Rapid and sweeping changes are needed. To be faithful to its call to discipleship, the Church should support the revolution.

If this position is adopted by the Council, there will be immediate reprisals by the government. If the revolution is successful, the Church will play an active role in the new regime.



The Witness Party:

Believes that Christians should separate themselves from the world. The Church should establish alternative communities based on peace and cooperation. These communities would be examples of proper human relationships.

If this position is adopted by the Council, the Church will be viewed as an enemy of both the government and revolution. There will be reprisals from both sides.

## SPECIAL INTEREST PARTY PORTFOLIOS<sup>23</sup>

### NON-INVOLVEMENT PARTY

#### Background

The Non-Involvement Party is conservative and represents elite interests. This party assumes that Christians should not participate in political activities and that the church should support the state.

#### Purpose

The purpose of the Non-Involvement Party is to offer a resolution to the Council that would prohibit the United Church of Trios Cosmos from supporting the approaching revolution.

#### Guidelines For Writing a Proposal

The resolution offered to the Council should be prefaced by a brief statement regarding the Party's understanding of God and the church. The question of the state's authority should

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<sup>23</sup>One copy to each appropriate group.

also be addressed, as well as the role the church should play in society.

### Guidelines For Lobbying Noncommitted Delegates

Members of the Non-Involvement Party should use every opportunity to discuss their resolution with noncommitted delegates, explain their thinking, and solicit support. When Situational Change Announcements are released or announced by the President, Party members should respond to these (either favorably or in rebuttal) through personal contacts with noncommitted delegates, and/or written statements.

### Resources

(In the game's final form references will be made where appropriate theological and biblical material can be found in the Resource Manual.)

## NON-VIOLENT REFORM PARTY

### Background

The Non-Violent Reform Party is moderate, and represents elite and middle class interests. This party assumes that Christians should not support violent activities against the state. The status quo is basically good, but some reforms are needed.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Non-Violent Reform Party is to offer a resolution to the Council that will urge the government to reform its repressive and restrictive policies. The resolution would also urge the United Church of Trios Cosmos to lobby the government in be half of these reforms.

### Guidelines For Writing a Proposal

The resolution offered to the Council should be prefaced by a brief statement regarding the Party's understanding of God

and the church. The relationship between church and state should also be addressed, as well as the Christian's responsibility to prevent violence.

#### Guidelines For Lobbying Noncommitted Delegates

(Same as previous party.)

#### Resources

(Same as previous party.)

### JUST REVOLUTION PARTY

#### Background

The Just Revolution Party is moderate to liberal, and represents middle and poor class interests. This party assumes that Christians can support violent activities against the state if certain criteria are met. The state is neither good nor bad and is subject to change if necessary.

#### Purpose

The purpose of the Just Revolution Party is to offer a resolution to the Council that would urge the government to engage in immediate and sweeping reforms. The resolution would also advocate that if these reforms do not occur, the United Church of Trios Cosmos should support the revolution guided by specific criteria. The resolution should also indicate the criteria.

#### Guidelines For Writing a Proposal

The resolution offered to the Council should be prefaced by a brief statement regarding the Party's understanding of God and the church. The relationship between church and state should also be addressed, as well as the limits of Christian obedience to an unjust state.

Guidelines For Lobbying Noncommitted Delegates

(Same as previous party.)

Resources

(Same as previous party.)

## THE LIBERATION PARTY

Background

The Liberation Party is radical and represents poor class interests. This party assumes that Christians should support violent activities against an unjust state. The status quo is evil, and Christians are called to struggle against it.

Purpose

The purpose of The Liberation Party is to offer the resolution to the Council that the United Church of Trios Cosmos should support the revolution. This would mean both institutional support, and individuals taking up arms against the government.

Guidelines For Writing a Proposal

The resolution offered to the Council should be prefaced by a brief statement regarding the Party's understanding of God and the church. The church's solidarity with the poor and oppressed should also be emphasized, as well as the Christian responsibility to oppose evil. In addition, the principle that salvation is complete only through radical social transformation should be addressed.

Guidelines For Lobbying Noncommitted Delegates

(Same as previous party.)

### Resources

(Same as previous party.)

## THE WITNESS PARTY

### Background

The Witness Party is radical, and represents a variety of interests. This party assumes that Christians should not support violent activities that either defend or oppose the state. Both the status quo and its alternative are evil and should be avoided.

### Purpose

The purpose of the Witness Party is to offer a resolution to the Council that the United Church of Trios Cosmos should provide an alternative to the violence of the government and the revolution. This would be accomplished by establishing communities that would be separate from the values and practices of the world.

### Guidelines For Writing a Proposal

The resolution offered to the Council should be prefaced by a brief statement regarding the Party's understanding of God and the church. Since the Party recognizes that this "call to discipleship" will be rejected by both the government and the revolutionaries, the resolution will emphasize the necessary suffering that will result from this stance.

### Guidelines For Lobbying Noncommitted Delegates

(Same as previous party.)

### Resources

(Same as previous party.)

SITUATIONAL CHANGE ANNOUNCEMENT #1<sup>24</sup>Event

The government has launched an attack against suspected revolutionaries and dissidents. In the last few days many people have been killed or imprisoned. It is believed that some innocent individuals have been victimized in this latest "crackdown." Many citizens of Trios Cosmos are outraged. There is rioting and demonstrations in several cities, and some rural areas have joined the revolution. Several moderates in the government have resigned in protest. The government has also announced that more severe measures may be needed in the future to maintain order.

Impact on Government

The government is adopting a "hard line" attitude toward all reform efforts. It is attempting to maintain its power through rigorous counter-revolutionary measures. The government has imposed marshall law in the cities, and has initiated policies which further restricts criticism in the press and through public demonstrations.

Impact on Revolutionaries

Although some leadership has been lost, the revolution is gaining support throughout Trios Cosmos.

Impact on the Church

Unfavorable responses by either the government or the revolutionaries depend on the resolution to be passed by the Council.

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<sup>24</sup>Announced by the President of the Council, and one copy distributed to each participant.

## SITUATIONAL CHANGE ANNOUNCEMENT #2

Event

The United States and its western European allies have announced their strong support of the government. This means increased economic and military aid. An improved economy and greater police capability is anticipated. It has also been rumored that several eastern European nations will now supply the revolutionaries with sophisticated weaponry.

Impact on Government

The military capability of the government will be strengthened, and the economic aid will mean greater support by the middle class. Although the government's overall position will be enhanced, the nation is becoming more polarized due to resentment of foreign interference.

Impact on Revolutionaries

The revolutionaries will lose some middle class support in the cities but will gain some support in rural areas.

Impact on the Church

Although national tension and polarization has increased, many options remain open for the Council.

## SITUATIONAL CHANGE ANNOUNCEMENT #3

Event

The government has announced that it is willing to negotiate with the revolutionaries regarding some possible reforms. The government has stressed the urgency for land reform in the rural areas, and some additional programs for the urban poor.

Impact on Government

There is growing support for the government, except among conservatives and large land owners who think that this concession goes too far. Moderates have thrown their support to the government and are urging the revolutionaries to come to the negotiating table.

Impact on Revolutionaries

The revolutionaries are suspicious of this change in policy. They are convinced that it is merely a ploy or that elite groups will not allow the proposed reforms to be implemented. The revolutionaries are trying to solidify their support, but it is deteriorating.

Impact on the Church

Unknown, but there is probably greater support for the government.

## SITUATIONAL CHANGE ANNOUNCEMENT #4

Event

A severe crop failure and the withdrawal of two major United States corporations have thrown Trios Cosmos into a major economic depression. Unemployment and hunger-related diseases are widespread.

Impact on Government

Much of the blame for these events has been linked to the corruption and inefficiency of the bureaucracy. Dissatisfaction has been expressed from various classes. Unless the situation improves, the government believes that it will lose its power and control.



### Impact on Revolutionaries

These recent events have greatly increased revolutionary support and sympathy. The revolutionaries are particularly strong in rural areas where they have been able to provide minor assistance to the hungry. Major moves against the government are being planned.

### Impact on the Church

The United Church of Trios Cosmos has already instructed its agencies to alleviate as much of the suffering as possible. Due to the crisis that has swept the nation, the Church feels an urgency to act quickly, but there are fewer options open to the Council than before.

## SITUATIONAL CHANGE STATEMENT #5

### Event

The revolutionaries have attacked a military base as a show of strength. In doing so, however, several civilian workers were killed. This event has received wide spread media coverage. The result has been a backlash of unfavorable public opinion.

### Impact on Government

There has been greatly increased public support for the government. There is a general call for a strict policy to maintain law and order.

### Impact on Revolutionaries

There has been a sharp decline of public support for the revolutionaries, particularly in the rural area where the military base was located. The rural poor feel as victimized by the revolutionaries as they do by the military. The revolutionaries have decided to restrict their activities to less direct forms of confrontation.

### Impact on the Church

Due to this outbreak of violence, there is increased pressure on the Council to adopt a resolution which supports the government.

### RESULTS TABLE<sup>25</sup>

The purpose of this Result Table is to stimulate initial discussion on the resolution passed by the Council. Special attention should be directed toward the assumptions and implications of these probable results. Additional possible results should also be solicited from the participants and discussed.

Probable results of the resolutions proposed by the special interest parties if adopted by the Council:

#### Non-Involvement Party

1. Receive support from the government.
2. Continued economic prosperity for the Church.
3. The Church will become an enemy of the revolution.
4. The radical and liberal wings of the Church will be alienated.

#### Non-Violent Reform Party

1. The Church will attempt to reform some policies.
2. The Church will lose some support from the government.
3. The Church will be viewed with suspicion by the revolutionaries.
4. The radical wing of the Church will be alienated.

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<sup>25</sup> Announced by the President of the Council.

5. If the revolution is successful, there will be some reprisals against the Church.

#### Just Revolution Party

1. The Church will attempt to reform some policies.
2. The Church will establish criteria regarding its support of the revolution if reform should fail.
3. Alienation of the conservative and radical wings of the Church will depend on future actions.
4. Reprisals from the government or the revolutionaries will depend on future actions by the Church.

#### The Liberation Party

1. The Church will suffer immediate and severe reprisals by the government.
2. The Church will divest itself of much of its property and actively support the revolutionaries.
3. If the revolution is successful, the Church will play an active role in the new nation.
4. Conservative and moderate wings of the Church will be alienated.

#### The Witness Party

1. The Church will be the enemies of both the government and the revolutionaries.
2. The Church will suffer regardless of the outcome of the revolution.
3. Many people within the Church will be alienated.

## CHAPTER 5

## CONCLUSION: THE ROLE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY

It has been the purpose of this project to formulate a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution. The methodology has been to examine the historical development and contemporary western perspectives, as well as offer an educational curriculum. Liberation theology has played a central role in this endeavor because of its critique of western perspectives and its claim of a superior understanding and response to the issue. No contemporary theological and ethical analysis of revolution can overlook the claims of liberation theology since it was born in the midst of revolutionary struggle.

What follows is a brief summary of the contributions and liabilities liberation theology brings to the church's attempt to formulate an appropriate understanding of and response to violent revolution. A more thorough and systematic analysis of liberation theology, in this regard, would move this project beyond its proper scope. Rather, the purpose of this summary is to offer a tentative answer to the questions: Is liberation theology an adequate representation of Christian faith to the problem of violent revolution? and Can it play a significant role in developing an appropriate understanding of and response to this issue?

Liberation theology offers four major contributions

to the church's theological and ethical understanding of violent revolution. First, its insistence on the centrality of history provides theological and moral reflection with an immediate and concrete context. This can be seen in the authority, scope, and locus of liberation methodology. It is within history that people ask their most pressing questions of meaning and value. Theological and ethical constructs which ignore this concern are, quite rightly, excused as irrelevant. The liberation theologians are also correct in insisting that historical existence must have specific contextual referents. History is not a speculative category of thought but a series of experiences created and responded to in precise times and locations. Moral reflection and action must be contextually rooted if they are to be efficacious. Clearly, social, political, and economic structures provide the dominant locus of moral action in the modern world. In addition, these structures present the greatest potential threats and benefits to human welfare. In this regard, liberation theology represents a radical and constructive departure from traditional western perspectives which have employed theological methodology within a historical vacuum.

Second, liberation theology reminds us that theological and ethical constructs are conditioned by perspective and ideology. The attempt to articulate an objective account and offer a universal application of faith is an unproductive enterprise which distorts more than it clarifies. The liberation

theologians are correct in insisting that we must critically inquire as to the limitations of any perspective and relative veracity, vis-a-vis faith, of ideological assumptions.

Whether or not the liberation theologians have proven their perspectives and ideological assumptions preferable is problematic, but theology and ethics will at least be more honest, and hopefully more productive, with a critical awareness of the vested interests represented in the debate surrounding the issue of revolution.

Third, liberation theology has forced the church to reappropriate, or at least reconsider, the importance of praxis. The dominant concern of modern western theology has been to either defend or challenge orthodoxy, and ethical reflection has been largely confined to theoretical issues. This has reduced Christian faith to an intellectual pursuit which does not engage in critical reflection and action, much less advocate strategies and tactics needed to bring about social, political, and economic change. This can be seen in the liberation theologians' critique of European political theology. Although liberation and political theology share many common concerns and assumptions, political theologians do not offer specific methods to implement their program within historical contexts. Liberation theology is correct in insisting that theological and ethical constructs which do not address the question of tactics and strategy is of limited value. If faith reflects an "ultimate concern," it includes

action within social, political, and economic structures.

Fourth, liberation theology has made explicit the relationship between moral action and eschatology. Rejecting all nonhistorical eschatologies, liberation theology insists that present action creates and makes possible the future-- i.e., humans assume responsibility for the creation of their future. The obvious implication of this eschatological responsibility is that if the realization of the kingdom is dependent on its antecedent historical situation, Christians must assume the task of building social, economic, and political structures that will make its realization possible. History is not headed toward a fixed destination but is in the process of reforming and reshaping a desired horizon. The purpose of faith is not to trust in a non- or post-historical "reality," but to create a desirable future which incorporates faith through contemporary struggle and action. The future impinges upon the present only through anticipated or expected consequences of present action.

Although liberation theology helps to clarify the agenda for formulating a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution, its methodology and program also have a number of liabilities.

In a recent article,<sup>1</sup> Robert Osborn has pointed out

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<sup>1</sup>Robert T. Osborn, "Some Problems of Liberation Theology: A Polanyian Perspective," Journal of the American Academy of Religion 51 (1983) 79-97.

four "confusions" in liberation theology that have implications for our concern. First, Osborn argues that liberation theology has not adequately defined the problem it is addressing.

Liberation theology generally tends to be unclear and inconsistent in its account of just what the problem is, how it arises and is discerned, and in what sense it is "theological."<sup>2</sup>

The question is whether political, social, and economic oppression is a problem which theology should respond to, or a problem that is perceived because of a theological perspective? What is at stake here is the proper role and function of hermeneutics and its relationship with ethics, particularly if history is the principal mode of both. As we will see, this confusion results in an inconsistent use of history when applied to ethical issues.

Second, liberation theology has not adequately explained why it has limited its scope to a contextual basis.

[A] common denominator of all forms of liberation theology is the contention that theology must be contextualized within the liberation struggle. The question raised by this common emphasis is: Just what is the place of the historical context in the reflection of the theologian? . . . [I]t is . . . necessary to ask whether the historical context, the situation which calls for liberation, functions primarily as the necessary context of theological reflection or as itself the object of reflection.<sup>3</sup>

Does the contextual emphasis of liberation theology serve as a paradigmatic device for understanding the function of faith

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 81-81.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., 85.



in history, or is it the exclusive mode through which faith is realized? This confusion has important implications for understanding the role of the poor and oppressed in revolutionary struggle.

Third, liberation theology is unclear about its relationship with tradition. "Another rather common problem for liberation theologians, one that does not fail to trouble most of them, is what to make of the theological tradition."<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, liberation theologians attempt to remain in dialogue with their theological tradition by arguing that their method is representative of dominant biblical motifs.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, they stress that in order for history to be saved, there must be a radical departure from traditional theological methods and conclusions. This problematic relationship with tradition has resulted in a naive and uncritical anthropocentrism that has distinct implications for a moral understanding of revolution.

Fourth, with this stress on praxis, liberation theology has not adequately defined the role of vision within the purpose and scope of theological reflection.

As we ask about the theological vision we are addressing two related problematics of liberation theology--the first has to do with the role of academic theology as such, and the second with the legitimacy of universals

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 88.

<sup>5</sup>The Exodus story and selected prophetic material are examples.

in theology. Both questions arise as corollaries of the emphasis in liberation theology on the importance of a concrete, liberating praxis, since this would appear to minimize or undermine the significance of the academic task (the desk job, as it were) of formulating not only<sup>6</sup> visions, but apparently abstract and universal visions.

With this confusion concerning the relationship between "desk-centered" and "action-centered" theology, there is no explicit guidance on how Christian moral reflection can be applied in a faithful and pertinent manner to concrete situations. How does one remain faithful in making the transition from the desk to the market place? As we will see, this is particularly important when liberation theologians use agape to justify the use of violence in achieving social, political, and economic change.

Osborn's theological critique raises four ethical issues. First, although history plays a central role, liberation theologians do not utilize history to either support their program or to indicate an exemplary revolution. Historical experience itself has not provided an adequate basis upon which contemporary revolutionary movements can draw guidance or support. No previous revolution is used as a paradigm to guide or critique current revolutionary struggle. For example, Bonino praises the accomplishments of the Cuban revolution but insists that it "is not a model to be

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<sup>6</sup>Osborn, 90.

reproduced."<sup>7</sup> Although liberation theologians might respond by arguing that previous revolutions were not motivated by proper theological insights, it is still problematic whether or not a theology rooted in historical experience can function when it divorces itself from any specific historical examples. At this point, liberation theology suffers from the same idealism it condemns in western theology--i.e., it assumes a properly motivated revolution will result in action quite unlike its historical antecedents. The problem for ethics, however, is that moral reflection is still being pursued within a historical vacuum. Liberation theologians offer no specific examples which support the veracity or efficacy of their claims. Consequently, the revolutionary struggle for liberation will not necessarily result in the conclusion envisioned by liberation theology. If the poor and oppressed are given the means to create their own history, there is little evidence that it will be more consistent with the Christian vision of the kingdom.

Second, from an ethical perspective liberation theology has not adequately explained why the poor and oppressed play the central role in the realization of salvation within history. Granted, a principal biblical motif is the struggle of the poor to achieve freedom from oppressive social

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<sup>7</sup>Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation, 33.

structures, but there are also competing biblical themes which stress far different concerns.<sup>8</sup> By stressing one particular biblical motif to the exclusion of others, liberation theology tends to absolutize what is relative; Christian faith becomes synonymous with a particular class interest within a specific historical time and place.<sup>9</sup> The cause of the poor and oppressed takes on a holy characteristic in which social, political, and economic oppression becomes a war between the righteous and unrighteous. Although liberation theologians may argue that such a dualism is avoided because class struggle is motivated by agape (which loves both the oppressed and oppressor), as we will see later, such a claim is untenable because the methods used to achieve liberation are themselves inconsistent with the claims of agape. By absolutizing the role of the poor and oppressed, liberation theology comes dangerously close to falling into the same trap as did the violent Anabaptists--i.e., the elect assume the duty of bringing the kingdom into history by using whatever means are available. Consequently, political, social, and economic status becomes a predeterminant for election. Moral judgment does not rest

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<sup>8</sup>For example, see Walter Brueggemann's discussion of "the royal consciousness" within Old Testament literature in his The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978) 28-43.

<sup>9</sup>This is not unlike the current apocalypticism which sees the United States and the nations of the middle East playing a central or divine role in the "end of time."

upon unjust relationships, per se, but upon specific classes of people. Moral judgments are made, therefore, within the confines of this class struggle (and the side one happens to be on) rather than a more universal context.

Third, due to liberation theology's uneasy relationship with tradition, its ethics reflect a naive and uncritical anthropocentrism. Because of liberation theology's exclusive attention toward human relationships, moral decisions are made solely on the basis of the benefits achieved by one particular group or class of people. Consequently, the Christian tradition, which assumes responsibility for nonhuman concerns, (e.g., creation or nature) is virtually ignored or reduced to an instrumental value. What is judged to be good or right is defined solely in terms of what benefits the poor and oppressed. Theologically this means, as Gustafson points out, ". . . that the purposes of God are finally for the benefit of human beings."<sup>10</sup> The problem for ethics is that once again the context for determining right and wrong or good and evil is reduced to an extremely narrow context. Rather than trying to make ethical judgments in terms of a larger context (e.g., the good of the whole, or the good of God), moral determinations are made within a narrow historical context in which certain actors are already determined to possess

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<sup>10</sup>James M. Gustafson, Ethics From a Theocentric Perspective (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981) I, 92.

superior moral claims. Therefore, moral action that is motivated by the claims of a "universal faith" is ultimately reduced to self-interested action. Other humans, and nature itself, exists for the purpose of achieving political, social, and economic liberation. This is an anthropocentric ethic in its narrowist form; it reduces all moral problems to the expediency of a specific historical moment. Furthermore, it is highly problematic for Christian ethics since the process of liberation becomes the "measure of all things" rather than humanity within the humanistic tradition, or God within the Reformed tradition.<sup>11</sup> The scope of Christian ethics is greatly reduced, and the faith is stripped of any universal moral claims. In short, Christian ethics has been reduced to its most provincial and self-interested form. Revolution itself becomes an intrinsic, rather than instrumental, value.

Fourth, because of liberation theology's inadequate definition of theological vision, it uses the principle of agape to justify the use of violence rather than critically appraising violence as a consistent expression of love in concrete historical situations. Liberation theology assumes that since revolutionary violence is needed to achieve social, political, and economic change, its use reflects a legitimate and necessary application of agape. The problem with this assumption, however, is that it becomes virtually impossible

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<sup>11</sup>See *ibid.*, 157-193.

to make critical moral assessments of methods employed in the name of agape (e.g., terror, subversion, etc.). There is no specific vision as to which methods can be compared in terms of their moral consistency. The goal of realizing agape is in itself ambiguous, much less the relationship between the ends and means. This results in dehumanizing the enemy (the oppressor) as an expression of love for the oppressed neighbor--the enemy is killed as a concrete expression of love. If this understanding of agape can be justified, then the previous objections raised lose much of their validity because of the central role agape plays in Christian ethics. It is for this reason that liberation theology's understanding of the relationship between agape and violence requires an extended discussion and critique.

What is at stake in establishing a moral consistency between agape and violence is how agape is understood and practiced within history. Liberation theology assumes that within the context of the Third World agape is synonymous with justice. Action which makes possible social, political, and economic justice reflects the actualization of agape. Within the Third World this means that violent revolutionary struggle is required since the status quo prohibits the poor and oppressed from experiencing justice.

The principal ethical issue for liberation theologians in this situation is to determine when Christians can legitimately employ violence to achieve structural justice. Their

argument runs something like this: Most of the people in the Third World suffer from structural violence that is deeply rooted in unjust political, social, and economic institutions. Christians within this context are required to love their neighbor, most of whom suffer from injustice. Since the cause of the injustice is structural, isolated acts of love toward a limited number of individuals is not effective. Fundamental social, economic, and political change is required. Furthermore, the existing regimes have shown little inclination toward change but instead perpetuate structural violence. The loving thing one can do for his or her neighbor, therefore, is to engage in revolutionary violence in order to replace the status quo with more just structures. Revolutionary action becomes the way to actualize agape within this historical context, and the means to do this are violent by necessity.

This attempt to equate agape with justice is problematic for ethics. For example, Gene Outka argues that a theological understanding of justice has meant such things as the rendering to each individual his or her due, a movement toward reunion, or an approximation of human solidarity under conditions of sin.<sup>12</sup> As Outka makes clear, "a conceptual vagueness surrounds justice in the literature."<sup>13</sup> The

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<sup>12</sup>See Gene Outka, Agape (New Haven: Yale University, 1972) 75-92.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 75.



relationship between agape and justice is not, therefore, clearcut--indeed, some ethicists have drawn sharp distinctions between them, or insist that they represent opposite concerns.

Once again the lack of theological vision has made a moral assessment of methods virtually impossible within liberation theology's program. Since the realization of agape or justice will be worked out in the struggle for liberation, there is no particular goal against which moral consistency of action can be judged. The pressing demands of each moment require action that may not necessarily be compatible with the intended results. The realization of agape or justice takes place on an ad-hoc basis. Specific actions are not assessed in relationship to rendering each individual his or her due or a movement toward reunion or approximating human solidarity, much less equating revolutionary violence with the self-sacrificing demands of agape. There are three reasons why the use of revolutionary violence is inconsistent with the principle of agape.

First, the concrete realization of agape should be achieved through persuasion rather than coercion. This does not mean that the use of violence is prohibited, but its basis is something other than agape. The love of neighbor is better exemplified by persuading others to change their unjust ways. In so doing, the neighbor (even the unjust one) is regarded more seriously as a subject capable of change, rather than an object to be altered or eliminated through

coercive force. This is more in line with traditional Christian understandings of the use of violence (e.g., the just war doctrine). Violence is viewed not as an act of love but as the result of unfortunate or sinful conditions. Violence is justified only when all means of peaceful resolution have failed. It is an agonizing decision emphasizing human failure rather than attempting to actualize a noble ideal such as agape. This can be seen in Luther's view that soldiers were not to be glorified as heroes, but serve as reminders of humanity's inability to live up to its own ethical standards. Liberation theology's use of revolutionary violence is dehumanizing because the neighbor (as enemy) is beyond the hope of change through persuasion. The use of violence to achieve justice may prove successful, but it is due to the failure of agape rather than its actualization.

Second, although liberation theologians are correct in insisting that the root of justice lies in agape, the quality of agape is abstracted to the point that the individual, as such, is no longer seen. The justification for revolutionary violence is made through appeal to a quality (i.e., agape) that does not exist within the social, political, and economic structures of the Third World. For agape to be realized in this context, those who stand in the way of fundamental change must be pushed aside or eliminated. Such a conclusion is based on a sociological analysis that relegates moral consideration of individuals to less than a

secondary concern. Consequently, this analysis is dehumanizing because the given social or class status of an individual determines his or her complicity in the maintenance of unjust structures. Relative levels of guilt or responsibility are given little, if any, consideration. For example, a revolution is motivated and conducted largely from the perspective of class struggle or conflict. Individuals comprising the elite and their supporting infrastructures are viewed as the enemy. Consequently, relative merit or culpability cannot be considered. This may result in a common fate shared by individuals representing a wide range of participation in unjust structures. The spectrum will range from innocent people (e.g., children) killed in terrorist acts, to soldiers defending the state for mercenary reasons, to leaders of a regime who have consciously perpetuated injustice for personal gain. Although a class struggle analysis may be necessary for the success of a revolution, ultimately it is individuals who are killed. The elimination of social and economic classes may produce justice, but if individuals are dehumanized (i.e., denied just and self-sacrificing regard) in the process, its moral linkage with agape is at best questionable.

Third, dehumanization can also be seen in liberation theology's tendency to absolutize "the good." The revolutionary struggle for liberation is viewed as a confrontation of absolute importance (e.g., the salvation of history) rather than of relative importance. As a result, the enemy is often

characterized as being evil or demonic rather than as individuals who possess opposing claims. The cause of the enemy has no legitimate moral claim which needs to be regarded by the revolutionaries. Historically, this perspective has manifested some peculiar acts of "love." For example, heretics were killed during the inquisition because of the church's love for the neighbor who might be corrupted by heresy. A revolutionary ethos might depend upon a perspective that views the enemy in absolute terms, but it is incompatible with the principle of agape which demands that the neighbor be given equal regard.

To summarize, the employment of violence to achieve social, political, and economic justice, as understood by liberation theology, results in a dehumanizing process that is inconsistent with the principle of agape. This dehumanizing process is seen in the use of coercion rather than persuasion, in abstracting agape, and in the tendency to absolutize the good. Such qualities are morally inconsistent with agape because coercion objectifies humans, abstracting agape loses sight of individuals within historical situations, and absolutizing the good cannot adequately regard the moral claims of the enemy (who is also a neighbor).

This leads us to a final dilemma: Revolutionary violence may indeed be the only effective way to achieve justice in the Third World, but if agape cannot be actualized through revolutionary violence, is there an ethic that would permit

(or even demand) Christian participation?

My own bias at this point needs to be expressed. Revolutionary violence in the Third World is justified by conditions present there. No measure of human decency and dignity can justify the widespread misery. But I am uncomfortable equating agape with the violence that will be needed to replace the offending regimes. I believe an ethic exists, however, that would be compatible with Christian morality, and although not directly linked with agape, would help to pave the way for its future realization.

Shortly before his death, H. Richard Niebuhr started to develop his ethic of responsibility.<sup>14</sup> He attempted to articulate the meaning of Christian responsibility within societal structures and history. For Niebuhr, the fundamental questions were "What is happening?" and "What is the fitting response to what is happening?"<sup>15</sup>

Within Niebuhr's ethical framework, individuals achieve selfhood and societies express their humanity in response to action directed toward them by others. As a result, the major elements of Niebuhr's ethics include responses to previous and current action, accountability for the response in anticipation of future responses to it, and the larger context within which this process takes place.

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<sup>14</sup>See Niebuhr, The Responsible Self.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 67.

Consequently, faith displaces agape as the primary consideration in ethics. Faith is defined as "trust or mistrust" that "accompanies all our encounters with others and qualifies all our responses."<sup>16</sup> For the purpose of this project, Niebuhr's ethic would allow revolutionary action if it (and its methods) represented a fitting response to an unjust situation. At this point agape can play an informing role, but a role far different than one advocated by liberation theology. Agape may inform what a fitting response may be, but it is one consideration among many. In some situations--such as revolutions--the fitting response may not be the same as the loving one. What is of paramount importance is that the fitting response be made with the faith that the current action being undertaken will help make possible the future realization of agape.

An ethic in which justice is based on responsibility rather than agape is preferable for two reasons. First, a justice-based responsibility places the dehumanizing process in a different moral perspective. If agape is used as the basis for justice, its advocates are forced to conclude that either the actualization of agape favors some individuals over others, or the violent means employed are inconsistent with agape but are justified by the eventual goal. In either case, liberation theologians are hard pressed to indicate how

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 118.

agape's demands of sacrifice and equal regard for the neighbor are being demonstrated in acts of violence. If responsibility is the motivation for justice, however, the consequences of a fitting response are seen in a new light. For example, if a fitting response to oppression is violence, the ensuing dehumanizing process can be viewed as a tragic but necessary result of a desperate situation. This is more in line with the traditional Christian view which sees violence as the failure of persuasion--a necessary though regrettable response. In so doing, agape is not abstracted because it informs the acts required to realize justice. Individual moral claims are still recognized within conflicting social classes and groups. This also places a check upon the tendency to absolutize the good. A fitting response recognizes that the eventual realization of agape may not depend on the success of specific revolutions but are instead parts of the process moving toward its future actualization.

This leads us to the second reason. Although the fitting response to oppression may not actualize agape, it can prepare the context for the future. This is similar to Mao's concept that a step backward must first be accomplished before two steps forward can be attempted. Radical structural changes must first occur before more idealistic conditions can be implemented. To use biblical imagery, the revolutionary plays the role of John the Baptist rather than Jesus. The revolutionary destroys the old in preparation for the new.

From this perspective, the basis for ethics is responsibility rather than agape, the dominant characteristic of the yet to be realized new age. The pervasive mood is that of agonized decision-making, recognizing that the way of "the good" is prepared in relative, rather than absolute terms. The revolutionary cannot experience the actualization of agape because, although he or she may oppose the present in hope of a better future, the revolutionary is nonetheless the product of a generation that must first pass away before the new can be born.

It can be argued that my objections to liberation theology reflects my values and biases as a middle class member of the First World. This is a fact I cannot, nor do I wish to, deny. But how else can I respond when part of my biography is shaped by an accident of birth within a privileged class? I cannot truly know the oppression of the Third World, and my understanding of Christian theology and ethics is based on far different experiences. This admission is both a confession of limited perspective, and an attempt to deal with issues raised by liberation theology in terms that are meaningful, rather than foreign, to my frame of reference.

It is due to a limited perspective that a, rather than the, Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution can be formulated. Historical existence emphasizes both the limitation and changing character of perception and



response. Liberation theology has written an important, but not the final, chapter in the church's struggle to deal with the important issue of social, political, and economic change. Although liberation theology reminds us of the importance of history, ideology, praxis, and eschatology, it also indicates the need for clearly defining the problem being addressed, maintaining a commitment to the universal dimension of Christian faith, remembering our tradition, and refining our theological vision. The value of liberation theology is that it helps to create that necessary tension between the concrete and particular demands of faith with the need for abstract and general principles. This tension is necessary for formulating a Christian understanding of and response to violent revolution that avoids the temptation of passing fancy or vacuous speculation.

## APPENDIX

## KOHLMBERG'S MORAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

## LEVEL I

## Preconventional

- 1.) Punishment and Obedience
- 2.) Personal Usefulness

## LEVEL II

## Conventional

- 3.) Approval Seeking
- 4.) Law and Order

## LEVEL III

## Postconventional

- 5.) Social Contract
- 6.) Personal Conscience

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